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Wet Chicago: Prohibition and the Development of the Informal Alcohol Economy

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

WET CHICAGO: PROHIBITION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
INFORMAL ALCOHOL ECONOMY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY

BRIAN D. JOLET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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INTRODUCTION

Debates over the values, governmental policies, and culture of the United States have persisted throughout all periods of the country's history. The years between 1919 and 1933, the era of national Prohibition, were critical in defining American society and identity. With the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment and the accompanying National Prohibition Act, anti-alcohol reformers believed they had finally defeated the influential beer and liquor industries and the saloons they operated.¹ The abolishment of the booze trade would relieve the nation of its numerous perceived problems, namely poverty, labor conflicts, domestic violence, fears of immigrant masses, and a general mounting sense of immorality and social disorder. Despite this effort, drinking customs perpetuated and new types of leisure establishments emerged to accommodate them. Instead of alleviating the country of its crises, new dilemmas burgeoned. The idea of an all-pervading ban on alcohol accomplished through the federal state soon lost support.²

This victory for supporters of legal alcohol was largely due to the destructive lawlessness and social disorder that accompanied Prohibition. For many Americans, civilized society seemed to be deteriorating as the result of the

¹The National Prohibition Act was also referred to as the Volstead Act after Congressman Andrew Volstead of Minnesota who drafted the legislation.

²Michael Lerner describes how alcohol became the center of a major cultural battle in *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), Introduction and Chapter Four.

criminalization of alcohol. The most dramatic transformations in urban United States related to the attempt to eliminate wine, liquor, and beer occurred within the realm of crime and criminal justice.

Metropolitan Chicago particularly illustrates the significance of this episode in United States history. The proceedings within the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois at Chicago reveal the enormity of the impact of the attempt to eradicate alcohol. Beginning around 1920, the year the Eighteenth Amendment took effect, the number of criminal cases per a year within the court expanded almost sixfold. Charges against men and women who sold, transported, possessed, and manufactured alcohol—or conspired to do so—composed over eighty percent of the total defendants. The number of lawbreakers encountering the court grew into the tens of thousands, representing a considerable proportion of the population who lived in region. While the presence of these numerous producers, distributors, and retailers may not appear historically significant, the sheer quantity of this illicit activity provides a clue as to the dominating influence Prohibition had on economics, culture, and government during the period.³

In one sense, the history of the Prohibition era is a story of continuity. The persistence of drinking customs in the United States demonstrated how common alcohol use was, despite the legal attempt to eliminate it. The political and cultural battles between anti-alcohol reformers and the liquor and beer industries, and their

³Criminal Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Volumes 12, 13, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois.

customers, ended with a discomfoting loss for those residents hoping to see a world without intoxication. Nonetheless, the period brought about a transformation in the prevalence and function of criminal endeavors. Alcohol production and distribution developed into a structured and widespread informal economy that provided a novel means of wealth attainment both for residents who were previously law-abiding and for those who were unlawful prior to the Eighteenth Amendment.

The pervasiveness of crime in 1920s Chicago is hardly news to most people. During the Prohibition era, the city exhibited an image of criminality and violence to the outside world that few urban areas—both within and without the United States—rivaled. Literature, movies, and other popular cultural artifacts document this upsurge of unlawfulness. This impression rests partially in truth. Illegitimate systems of alcohol manufacturing, sale, and consumption grew so significant they transformed the day-to-day lives of the majority of the city's population. The criminalization of alcohol influenced how individuals related to each other and how they interacted with the outside world. Encountering criminal activity became a more frequent occurrence and less taboo. Respect for the government and the law declined. New forms of violence and murder arose.

Previous histories of the Eighteenth Amendment have centered primarily on the numerous causes for its implementation. Few have attempted to uncover the multiple effects. These works describe how the social, cultural, religious, economic, and political developments accompanying industrialization and urbanization,

particularly after the 1890s, contributed to the spread of the mentality that brought about a dry country.⁴

The literature on Prohibition also explores the black market in alcohol during the era, often in the context of biographies of the most powerful tyrants. Stories of the lives of Al Capone, Dean O'Bannion, George Moran and other criminal leaders provide compelling tales of their activities and mentalities; however, they offer little in explaining how Prohibition ultimately affected the urban areas of the United States. Providing a more comprehensive account of how the Eighteenth Amendment impacted Chicago allows for a better understanding not only the city's and the country's criminal past but their political and cultural histories as well.⁵

⁴Norman Clark examined the reality of many of the fears of prohibitionists in *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976). Jack Blocker provided a comprehensive account of the temperance and prohibition movement from the late 1700s in *Cycles of Reform: American Temperance Movements* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988). Blocker's *Retreat from Reform: The Prohibition Movement in the United States, 1890-1913* (Wesport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976) focused on the rise of the conservative, non-partisan Anti Saloon League. W. J. Rorabaugh's *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) viewed anti-alcohol movements as responses to the increasing amount of alcohol Americans consumed. Ann Marie Syzmanski discussed the reasons for the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment within the context of the successes and failures of social movements in *Pathways to Prohibition: Radicals, Moderates, and Social Movement Outcomes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). She credits the appropriation of a moderate and gradual approach for the eventual success of prohibitionists. John J. Rumbarger's *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800-1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) stressed the economic aspects of Prohibition and repeal. Historians have come to interpret the Eighteenth Amendment as an element of "Progressive" reform. See James H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) and Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), Chapter Thirteen.

⁵Biographies and studies of Al Capone include Jonathan Eig, *Get Capone: The Secret Plot That Captured America's Most Wanted Gangster* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010); Robert J. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992); and John Kobler, *Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992). Kenneth Allsop's *The Bootleggers: The Story of Chicago's Prohibition Era* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1961) is among the most thorough anecdotal examinations of the impact of Prohibition on Chicago. Recent

This work of history expands upon recent studies of the Prohibition era in numerous ways. For instance, Michael Lerner's *Dry Manhattan* convincingly analyzes the Eighteenth Amendment as an attack on immigrant groups, as well as its relation to the entrance of women into public drinking places and their role in repeal, the development of Harlem as a site of slumming practices, changing middle-class attitudes toward alcohol, and the political developments related to dry laws in New York City. However, Lerner neglects to fully examine the massive economy that arose to produce, transport, and distribute illegal booze. Further, he does not fully consider the geographical aspects of the black market in alcohol and how it impacted different neighborhoods and communities. This dissertation is an attempt to examine these topics in Chicago.

Focusing on Chicago allows an assessment of Prohibition in a locale where its impact was most pronounced. While rural areas and small towns and cities also experienced the impact of the federal ban on alcohol, the sheer number of participants in the underworld in the Chicagoland region—and the amount of money involved—amplified the effects of the Eighteenth Amendment in a way not experienced in smaller cities and towns. A network of crime developed in Chicago that was unprecedented anywhere in the country at the time except perhaps New York City.

analyses of the period nation-wide or outside of Chicago include Michael Lerner's *Dry Manhattan* and Daniel Okrent's *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of the Prohibition Era* (New York: Scribner, 2010).

This study investigates the impact of Prohibition at both the aggregate and the individual level. By casting a wide net over the participants of the alcohol underworld, the project attempts to understand how the Eighteenth Amendment affected the greater populace. Al Capone did not build his fiefdom by himself but instead had the assistance of numerous Chicagoans who participated in the underground economy. The market in illegal beverages was larger than one man; hence Capone's incarceration in 1931 did little to halt illegal trafficking. Thousands of Chicagoans additionally entered the trade with no connection to Capone or other criminal leaders. The dissertation attempts to put names and faces on these residents who violated the law and better describe where they committed their crimes. The story examines the ascendance of a new class of criminals in the city and the augmented influence of the underworld. This concentration on the dry era is not meant to perpetuate stereotypes and clichés of the 1920s but instead to analyze and better understand the numerous participants in the illegal alcohol economy.

This history of the dry era utilizes a methodology that builds on statistical data derived from court records, newspapers, and reform organization records. Gathering the names of over nine thousand violators of Prohibition laws and the addresses of over three thousand illegal sites of production, retail, and storage, the study attempts to demonstrate—through a bottom-up approach—the prevalence of the informal alcohol economy and its importance to the economic, political, and cultural transformations of the period. Combining this quantitative research with

an analysis of textually oriented sources allows for a deeper understanding of the social trends that accompanied the growth of the alcohol underworld. The examination offers a more detailed account of the sources for liquor, beer, and wine, the processes of distribution, and the complexities of establishing sites of retail. The study also allows a fuller comprehension of the extent of these illicit markets and the manner in which they operated as networks of human relationships. Describing the negative impact of Prohibition in detail provides a lesson in the political and cultural effects of one attempt to legislate personal behavior.

The Eighteenth Amendment's impact extended far beyond the realm of crime and the underworld. While the effects of imbibing intoxicating beverages was the same as it ever was, the economic, cultural, and political environments surrounding Prohibition transformed society significantly. Alterations in gender roles, race relations, and inter-ethnic customs accompanied these changes.

Prohibition's greatest effect was that it allowed new opportunities for profit from market-based crimes, permanently altering the criminal landscape of Chicago. The city became intertwined with an international black market in alcohol that developed with its criminalization in the United States. Canada, Cuba, England, and a host of other nations, all contributed to its formation. This massive illicit, illegitimate economy grew and became increasingly entwined with the licit, legitimate economy. Any clear line between the two realms vanished. While violent rulers and their cohorts accumulated the greatest profits, the liquor and beer trade also contained thousands of husbands, wives, and children who labored within a

non-violent, often domestic, environment. Tens of thousands—most likely hundreds of thousands—of previously law-abiding men and women, who did not see themselves as brutal “gangsters” but merely breadwinners struggling to pay their bills, partook in producing and distributing illegal booze. Not believing they were doing anything essentially wrong or sinful, these individuals’ refusal to obey the law compromised the enforcement of Prohibition and eventually contributed to an increasingly cynical attitude toward the governmental status quo.⁶

The growth of syndicated crime was the most pronounced result of Prohibition. While thousands of independent participants evaded the tendency to organize, the primary trend was toward the consolidation of criminal leaders, social and fraternal organizations, politicians, enforcement agents, and the producers, distributors, and retailers of alcohol into stable networks of graft. While the leadership of these groups was constantly in flux, they provided a form of resiliency to the illegal booze market. Men from numerous ethnic backgrounds and neighborhoods forged alliances, if only temporarily, in order to expand distribution and wealth.

Building on the importation of criminals from New York City, the underground trade in alcohol in Chicago extended its reach into and then outside of the metropolitan area and became a critical component in the development of regional and national black market economies. The result was the creation of a

⁶*Denni Hlasatel*, 12 October, 1921, Chicago Foreign Language Press, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

hierarchical system of “entrepreneurs” and workers. The successful use of violence—in addition the ability to gain political clout and attain protection from arrest—often determined who rose to the top.⁷

The expansion of the illegal alcohol trade required the coordination between disparate social groups in order to thwart arrest and create a durable market. This criminal trafficking often generated new business alliances among men of different ethnicities. These relationships, however, were often tenuous and served merely to expand profit and sustain illegal operations. Sometimes participants welcomed these new forms of cooperation. Other times ethnic tensions led to violence.

The growth of this informal economy had gendered implications as well. Both men and women were critical to the operation of the black market in alcohol. While men composed over ninety percent of the participants, women also increasingly participated. Both former saloonkeeper women and sex workers initially were the main partakers. By manufacturing wine, beer, or liquor, women helped to revive an aspect of the domestic economy in decline prior to Prohibition due to large-scale breweries and distillers. An increasing array of women from different social backgrounds began producing and distributing illegal alcohol as the 1920s progressed. Married, single, and widowed females all used the Eighteenth Amendment to bring extra income into their homes. Many women additionally

⁷Robert Naylor offers a framework for studying black markets by offering five characteristics of organized crime—specialization in market-based crime, hierarchical structure, use of violence and corruption, high rates of return, and penetration of the legal economy—in *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 16.

contributed by acting as bondswomen. Nonetheless, just as in the legal economy, the highest positions of authority were not within the reach of women.⁸

The alcohol black market also influenced the African American community in Chicago. Black Chicagoans participated in illegal activity at a comparable rate as immigrant groups such as the Irish and Bohemians. However, while between 1919 and 1923, African Americans served as cabaret proprietors and distributors, by the late 1920s, their role was confined to still operators, truck drivers, and street sellers, tasks that brought much less income and influence than those positions available to men of other ethnic groups, such as the Italians, Irish, Germans, and Poles. Criminal leaders in the Black Belt were unable to fully take advantage of the profits of Prohibition. Instead, the Eighteenth Amendment opened the door for white residents to take control of the Black Belt underworld, leaving little of the wealth from the business to the African American community.⁹

The federal outlawing of alcohol not only created a novel category of lawbreakers who worked to produce illegal alcohol but also created new conditions

⁸For histories of the transformations in gender roles for women in the 1920s see Kenneth A. Yellis, "Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper," *American Quarterly* (Spring 1969), 44-64; Gerald E. Critoph, "The Flapper and Her Critics," in Carol V. G. George, ed., *Remember the Ladies: New Perspectives on Women in American History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1975), 145-160; Estelle Freedman, "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s," *Journal of American History* (September 1974), 372-393; Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2000). Catherine Gilbert Murdock's *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) examines the movement of alcohol into the home in the years before, during, and after the Prohibition era.

⁹For an examination of how race impacted organized crime in Chicago after Prohibition see John M. Hagedorn, "Race Not Space: A Revisionist History of Gangs in Chicago," *Journal of African American History*, Vol. 91 (Spring 2006), 194-208.

for consumers. New patterns of drinking behavior developed within leisure venues. While the act of ingesting alcoholic beverages changed little, the environment surrounding drinking became more diverse. Those residents who purchased and drank illegal alcohol, often within commercial establishments, had a considerable impact on the transformation of ethnic and cultural ideals during the 1920s and early 1930s. With the development of a more cosmopolitan ethos, drinking establishments where a number of men and women from various ethnic or racial groups drank together became more numerous in certain neighborhoods in the city.¹⁰

The Eighteenth Amendment also had a tremendous impact on governmental, police, and legal apparatuses in Chicago. While systems of graft existed prior to Prohibition, their influence expanded dramatically between 1920 and 1933. Corruption spread from the center wards in the city into more residential neighborhoods and surrounding towns. Through Republican Mayor Bill Thompson's growing system of graft and protection, criminal leaders gained increasing wealth and influence in politics.¹¹

The Eighteenth Amendment transformed Chicago politics, particularly the local Democratic Party. Chicago Democrats moved from the party of William Dever,

¹⁰For a description of inter-ethnic encounters in pre-Prohibition saloons see Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), Chapter Five.

¹¹Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan's *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953).

mayor of the city from 1923 to 1927 who cooperated with moral reformers and made efforts to enforce Prohibition, to the party of president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, Anton Cermak, who fought ardently for its repeal throughout his career. A number of developments brought together an alliance of Democratic voters in order to respond to the problems caused by the Eighteenth Amendment. The mass expansion of crime and the active participation of longtime Republican Mayor Bill Thompson in it during the 1920s convinced former Republicans, particularly middle-class Chicagoans, to vote Democratic in local elections, as they were the only party that appeared to fight the spread of lawbreaking. Further, other residents, particularly immigrant groups, increasingly voted Democratic due to the anti-Prohibition views of Anton Cermak, who broad coalition of repeal advocates brought him to the presidency of the Cook County Board and to the mayoralty.¹²

Chapter One examines the development of the social conflict between supporters and opponents of the Eighteenth Amendment and the logic and reasoning behind their beliefs. The chapter provides a description of the various segments of society who resisted Prohibition. Chapter Two presents a geographical study of how Prohibition affected Chicago's communities. Chapter Three begins an exploration of Chicago's alcohol underworld by describing the development of small-time bootleggers and the trend toward consolidation. Chapter Four turns to

¹²John Allswang, *A House of All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890-1936* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), Chapter Seven; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 255, 364.

the development of criminal leaders' attempts to structure the alcohol market.

The involvement of government officials and enforcement agents in the underworld is the focus of Chapter Five. The institutions that harbored illegal alcohol and the entrepreneurs who made them possible are the subject of Chapter Six. Chapter Seven concentrates on the movement against illegal alcohol and for legal booze within Chicago. The chapter focuses on the multitude of reasons for the building movement against Prohibition and the coalescing of numerous distinct groups that advocated repeal within the local Democratic Party.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PULSE OF THE LARGE CITY

On July 3, 1919, Chicago police officers made the first municipal arrest for a violation of wartime Prohibition. They took Rose Sozamuski and two patrons from her saloon at 1834 Iowa Street in the city's West Town community to the West Chicago Avenue precinct station. An immigrant from Poland who spoke little English, Sozamuski told police she had read in a Polish-language newspaper that the selling of wine and beer was perfectly legal. Sozamuski was one of the growing number of women who operated drinking venues without the assistance of a spouse in the early decades of the twentieth century. Having few other means to support her family, she planned to continue dispensing alcohol. While she was a minor figure with no political connections, Sozamuski was the first of tens of thousands of Chicagoans detained by local and federal officials for failing to obey the law over the following thirteen and a half years.¹

A wide array of men and women in Chicago opposed and violated Prohibition from its very beginning. Just as Sozamuski, few of these residents saw their actions as morally wrong or criminal. Consequently, by 1922, an unprecedented underground economy developed to supply libations to thirsty Chicagoans. Few

¹*Chicago Daily News*, 3 July, 1919, *Chicago Tribune*, 4 July, 1919. The Illinois Search and Seizure Act allowed for municipal enforcement of both the Wartime Prohibition Act and the National Prohibition Act. Sozamuski's arrest was both the Chicago Police Department's first arrest and the first arrest by any agency.

drinkers planned to actually comply with the new federal ban on alcohol and risk-takers were willing to break the law in order to profit. For some lawbreakers, illegal drinking, providing illicit beverages, and evading enforcement officials to do so, became the chief symbolic duty of the patriotic American citizen willing to express his or her personal liberty. Many looked on those residents who violated the law to supply alcohol to customer as heroes. Consequently widespread violations resulted in the world of crime blossoming from a largely segregated venture to one that touched every aspect of life in the city. The growth of this criminal world helped to create a novel culture that helped to build avenues of integration between men and women from all ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds—and from diverse neighborhoods—in order to produce, distribute, and consume alcohol.²

Even before the beginning of the dry era, the supporters of legal alcohol expressed numerous reasons to contest the Eighteenth Amendment. While they had lost the legal and political battles, opponents continued to attack the logic of Prohibition. They mounted an assault that culminated with the Eighteenth Amendment's repeal in 1933. An array of viewpoints and philosophies arose concerning the topic. A whole range of beliefs arose, from ardently dry to as "wet as Lake Michigan." Most everyone had an opinion and it became the center of many conversations. The matter drove political discussions and debates and was a core issue to many voters by the end of the 1920s.³

²*Chicago Tribune*, 4 February, 1951.

³*Chicago Tribune*, 2 April, 1932.

The alcohol question was the center of a cultural divide during the 1920s between those residents who supported the Eighteenth Amendment and those who opposed it. “Wets,” those who held any sort of approval for alcohol, and “drys,” those who wished to eliminate booze, debated a number of issues regarding the effectiveness and merits of Prohibition: its economic consequences and impact on labor disputes, its effectiveness in stemming drinking, its effects on poverty, spousal abuse, and abandonment within families, its influence on children, and its overall impact on crime. An inspiration for many wets was the question of criminalizing a personal behavior, drinking alcohol, in a country founded on principles of democracy and freedom. While drys attempted to portray those who opposed them as “un-American,” wets portrayed themselves as the true embodiment of the values of the United States Constitution.⁴

One veteran of World War I, writing to the *Tribune* a few days before the Eighteenth Amendment commenced, expressed the general opinion of the city. Coming home to the United States, he “found congress had ruined” the country and he was prepared to stop it. “I am now a bolshevist but an American one and there are thousands like me.” Aware that his wet opinion might disqualify him if he was an immigrant, he prefaced his statement saying he was born in Chicago and didn’t “want to be classed with those bohunk foreigners . . .” but, the writer continued, “wipe out that unjust law.” Like many other wets, he saw the law imposed on the

⁴Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), Chapter Three.

city from outside by rural and small town forces hostile to big city life. "What does a yap from the country [Congressman Volstead] know about the life in a large city? Liquor is the very pulse of a large city," he concluded. The writer's opinions were not radical or unpopular but reflected those of the majority of residents in Chicago.⁵

The final farewell to John Barleycorn, what many observers called "a summertime New Year's eve," took place on Monday, June 30, 1919, the day before the Wartime Prohibition Act became law on July 1. The oppositional character of the send-off alerted many observers. Karl Eitel, proprietor of a number of alcohol-selling establishments located downtown and on the North Side, observed that the farewell was not "merely a celebration." Instead, men and women turned out "in protest against the infringement upon their constitutional liberties." Revelers passed out and wore daisies to object to the commencement of wartime Prohibition. The greatest excitement was in the Loop where many celebrants vocally objected. One man stood on a wooden stand and yelled to the revelers, "Where's your liberty? Where's your freedom. The foundation of our liberties is being knocked from under us," prompting both support and aggression from bystanders.⁶

Despite the city's wet majority, drys had a long history in Chicago. Local prohibitionists were part of a growing nation-wide effort that brought together numerous interests. While scientific research had shown the negative impact of

⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 16 January, 1920.

⁶*Chicago Daily News*, 1 July, 1919; *Chicago Tribune*, 1 July, 1919.

alcohol on health, doctors and scientists were not the primary forces behind the movement. Instead the condemnation of booze was a cultural trope that developed over the course of the nineteenth century that was tied to various social, cultural, religious, economic, and political developments accompanying industrialization and urbanization.

The dry mentality was a component of the American drive toward self-restraint, discipline, and social and economic advancement. While associated with the middle class, it was not unique to any one social group. Anti-alcohol crusaders often expressed deeper concerns about the nation's rapidly growing cities. Temperance and prohibition groups soon came to see alcohol and the saloon as the root of all of society's perceived problems. Ethnic conflicts further related to concerns about drinking and intoxication. In both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, arguments over alcohol often mirrored the animosities between native-born Americans and the growing number of immigrant groups. Between the 1890s and 1910s, newcomers from eastern and southern Europe, who maintained customs of alcohol use, brought new worries of disorder and its connection to the liquor and beer industries.⁷

Prohibition was also similarly related to the developments in Protestant churches at the turn of the century, particularly related to revivalism. Protestant ministers and their congregations influenced by the Third Great Awakening, who

⁷Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), Chapter Thirteen; Michael Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 189-190.

increasingly viewed drinking as an immoral activity and the root of all social and economic problems, played a critical role in the development of the dry movement. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists were particularly represented in the anti-alcohol movement. The connection between religion and sobriety appeared even greater as many Catholics did not adhere to anti-alcohol ideology and appeared to be part of the country's intemperance problem. The Third Great Awakening and the renewal of revivalism intensified attempts to eliminate commercial sex and gambling in addition to liquor, wine, and beer from society. The crusade against drinking was merely one campaign of moral and religious reformers who aimed toward more coercive and institutional means of regenerating the nation.⁸

The developing conflict between “capital” and “labor” was a key source of the prohibition movement. Frequent breaks for alcohol during the day, the standard practice among workers in pre-industrial America, was not conducive to the goals of industrialization and interfered with both efficiency and safety. As dissatisfaction and unionization among labor intensified, industrial business leaders flocked to the anti-alcohol movement as a way to stem disorder. Many of the city’s employers supported Prohibition in an effort to create a more disciplined and profitable workforce and turn laborers away from unionization, socialism, and other radical causes. Most of Chicago's major factory owners donated money to dry groups and

⁸Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), Chapter Thirteen; John D. Buenker, “The Illinois Legislature and Prohibition, 1907-1919,” 363-384.

vocally advanced the cause. Employers such as Louis Swift and Cyrus McCormick Jr. supported the Eighteenth Amendment as a means to benefit workers and their productivity.⁹

Reformers were not just concerned about the habits of the working-class. Beginning in the late 1890s, and particularly around 1912, more and more members of the middle and upper classes participated in activities surrounding public drinking in restaurants, cabarets, clubs, cafes, and “black and tans.” New commercial establishments thrived where a mix of social types congregated, particularly in Chicago's Black Belt where Colosimo's and the Pekin Inn provided venues for a heterogeneous mix of men and women. The Rainbo Gardens and the Green Mill Gardens offered similar forms of leisure on the North Side. The city also experienced a dance hall craze in the early twentieth century. These new forms of middle-class amusements caused great concern for many reformers. Especially alarming to sensitive minds was that fact that women were becoming more common in these public leisure places.¹⁰

Seen as the breeders of crime, poverty, political corruption, and violence, the all-male saloon became the primary target to reformers. Some of their accusations about the saloon were in fact true. Many temperance advocates pointed to husbands who squandered their incomes in saloons and came home to physically

⁹John D. Buenker, “The Illinois Legislature and Prohibition,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Winter 1969), 365-366; Andrew Sinclair, *Era of Excess* (New York, 1962); John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

¹⁰Walter Noble Burns, *The One Way Ride* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1931), Chapter One.

abuse their wife and family, a claim with a large degree of truth. Many saloons in fact were haunts for perpetual criminals and almost all saloonkeepers did maintained some sort of political sway in their neighborhood communities. Although the number of homicides was decreasing in saloons by 1920, a large percentage of murders did continue to take place in and around drinking establishments.¹¹

Male-centered organizations, such as the Illinois Anti-Saloon League and the Chicago Law and Order League were a primary force behind lobbying the United States Congress for the Eighteenth Amendment's passage. Nonetheless, women, particularly those working in settlement houses and those who were members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, played a critical role as well. Many women advocated suffrage opposed saloons and drinking because the affect alcohol had on wives, homes, and childrearing. Further, intoxication caused men to desert their spouses. Jane Addams believed that men who drank "reduced the family to absolute destitution." Drunken husbands often beat their wives to the point of injury, causing many women to see good reason for eliminating liquor. Other reformers believed Prohibition was useful in keeping young boys and girls away from alcohol, particularly within the growing number of public dance halls.¹²

¹¹Norman H. Clark, *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); Jeffrey Adler shows how some saloons actually served as bastions of crime and violence in *First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago, 1875-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), Chapter One.

¹²*Chicago Tribune*, 15 January, 1916; Jane Addams, "A Decade of Prohibition," *The Survey*, October 1, 1929, 6-7.

While the dry mentality swept lawmakers throughout the nation, a significant portion of public consciousness remained steadfast against it, especially within northern cities such as Chicago. After more than a decade of state and local option laws that illegalized alcohol in the majority of the nation's terrain, Chicago remained a bastion of alcohol use. Although many local reformers viewed alcohol as the root of all societal problems, most Chicagoans looked to booze as a stimulant to relaxation, socialization, and creativity.¹³ Many of these disgruntled residents expressed their opinions. In the months before wartime Prohibition, hundreds of thousands of men and women, many from Chicago, sent "protest postcards" to their representative in the United States House of Representatives and Senate demanding a reversal of the inevitable ban on alcohol.¹⁴

The ineffectiveness of Prohibition was obvious early. Arthur B. Farwell of the Chicago Law and Order League, a private temperance and moral reform organization, estimated that more than a thousand saloons still ran wide-open two weeks after the beginning of wartime Prohibition.¹⁵ Before the Eighteenth Amendment became effective in January 1920, many observers proclaimed it a failure. The city's largest newspaper, the *Chicago Tribune*, referred to the law as "a disgrace to the nation . . . a moral disaster." It was "a fraud and . . . ha[d] made a fraud of law. It . . . increased the natural American insolence toward the law. It . . .

¹³Robert G. Spinny, *City of Big Shoulders: A History of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2000), 23-24.

¹⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 23, 25, June, 1919.

¹⁵*Chicago Daily News*, 17 July, 1919.

made ten law breakers [sic] where it found one. Authority is a jest and enforcement a joke," the editorial concluded.¹⁶ In September 1920, seven months after the Eighteenth Amendment took effect, Major R. A. Dalrymple, federal Prohibition chief for the central states, stated to a group of newspaper reporters, "Chicago is wetter today than it was before the Volstead Act went into effect last January." Nonetheless, he believed full enforcement was possible. However, before the end of 1920, Dalrymple had renounced his previous optimism and retired to other endeavors, leaving the job to his assistant.¹⁷

Although dries painted wets as evil connivers of the "liquor interests," men and women from a variety of backgrounds supported legal alcohol. The majority of the population resisted the failed experiment. In April 1919, in a local-option election, the city voted against Prohibition by a three to one margin, by almost two hundred fifty thousand votes. Women, who were seen as the ardent supporters of Prohibition, voted against the measure by about fifty thousand votes. All of the wards opposed the proposition. Even traditionally dry districts where saloons and the alcohol manufacturing industry had little political muscle, such as the Sixth and Seventh Wards encompassing Hyde Park, and the Twenty-third and Twenty-fifth Wards¹⁸ of the Lakeview and Uptown neighborhoods, rejected the measure.¹⁹

¹⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 2 January, 1920.

¹⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 22 July, 1920, 11 November, 1921.

¹⁸Ward boundaries were changed in 1922, placing these neighborhoods in new wards.

¹⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 2 April, 1919.

Veterans of the American Expeditionary Forces provided much vocal opposition. Returning to the United States in 1919 and 1920, two issues were on the minds of former soldiers: the search for employment and the loss of their personal freedom.²⁰ Some men even publicly complained about risking their lives for ideals of liberty only to come home and have a part of their freedoms eliminated.²¹ For instance, Colonel Henry J. Reilly, who fought under the artillery division during the war and claimed not to drink himself, called the Eighteenth Amendment unjust, asserting that "results in France had demonstrated that the American soldier might be permitted to drink without fear of disgracing either himself or his uniform."²²

The alcohol business itself coordinated the greatest initial resistance. While the brewers' associations initially relented, distillers planned a legal battle months before the nation went dry. In late 1918, forty-three independent beer and wine companies came together to form the Trades Union Liberty League. As state legislatures neared the thirty-six states needed to ratify the amendment, distillers from around the nation gathered in Chicago and pooled together over a billion dollars for the legal fight they anticipated.²³ Many saloon owners consciously planned to get arrested in order to get their cases into court and challenge the law.

²⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 29 March, 1919.

²¹*Chicago Tribune*, 13, 29 March, 1919, 16 January, 1920.

²²*Chicago Tribune*, 13 May, 1919.

²³*Chicago Tribune*, 8 January, 7 March, 1919.

Their attorneys Levy Mayer and Robert J. Nordhold took every legal strategy possible but were ultimately unsuccessful.²⁴ As July 1 neared, the Brewers' Association decided to begin a court battle as well. Less than two weeks after the beginning of wartime Prohibition, the Stenson Brewing Company challenged the law and was indicted for brewing beer of one percent alcohol content. Following similar logic in cases in New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Boston, and New Orleans, the company's attorneys, Henry Freeman, Michael Igoe, and Alfred Austrian argued that beer below two and three-fourths percent alcohol content was not intoxicating and should be permitted under Prohibition. The legal battles concerning both the constitutionality and the specifics of the law continued for years. Despite their defeat, Igoe and Freeman gained much publicity from their actions and continued to represent numerous defendants over the next fourteen years.²⁵

A large percentage of opposition came from ethnic communities. The majority of the city's population was either foreign-born or the children of at least one foreign-born parent. Between the 1880s and 1920, hundreds of thousands of Poles, Italians, Czechs, Slavs, Greeks, Irish, Germans, Austrians, Lithuanians, and Russians migrated to Chicago. According to the 1930 census, 148,622 Poles, 111,366 Germans, 78,462 Russians, 73,960 Italians, 65,735 Swedes, and 48,814 Czechs lived in the city. Their children composed an even larger percentage of inhabitants. An additional few hundred thousand black southerners arrived in the

²⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 4 July, 1919.

²⁵*Chicago Daily News*, 23 July, 1919.

early decades of the 1900s, and by 1930, the city's African American population was 233,903.²⁶

Some newcomers supported Prohibition, causing splits within these ethnic or racial groups. Nonetheless, a sizable portion of them rejected it. Alcohol usage was particularly engrained in the cultures of the Polish, Italians, Czechs, Germans, and Irish. Despite the prohibitionists' best efforts, the majority of these groups rejected the amendment. A few immigrants in fact responded by leaving the nation and returning to their home countries.²⁷

Some native-born observers correlated mass lawbreaking to the fact that most of these immigrants were from southern and eastern Europe. For instance, Dr. Copeland Smith, a pastor at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, believed Chicago "suffer[ed] from the unchecked stream of alien immigration from southern Europe which does not have so high a respect for law as the people of northern Europe." However, in reality opposition and violations of Prohibition occurred among immigrants from all countries, including northern European countries. Native-born residents broke the law at a comparable rate as well.²⁸

The reasons for the lawbreaking were common to most newcomers. Alcohol use was a valued custom within many immigrant communities in Chicago and they

²⁶Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, Chapter Four; John M. Allswag, *A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890-1936* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), 17-20.

²⁷Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), Chapter Five.

²⁸Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, Chapter Four; *Chicago Tribune*, 23 November, 1925.

considered the amendment a direct attack upon their culture and values. Most ethnic groups maintained their own cultural heritage of which drinking was a part and each had their own preferred beverages.²⁹ They associated many daily social routines with drinking. Saloons, despite the valid association they sometimes had with crime, corruption, and murder, were more often a second home for many men; there was little chance this fondness would disappear overnight.³⁰ Many of the city's workers, in fact, continued to practice the long tradition of a "morning bracer" to start the day.³¹ Numerous communities used the saloon both as a setting for social relations and as headquarters for unions, political organizations, and other social clubs. Saloonkeepers maintained close contact with their patrons and provided basic services for them. Food was commonplace at most saloons, and the owner often provided it at a low price. Many retail establishments additionally functioned as banks for laborers.³²

The Eighteenth Amendment mixed in the minds of many ethnic Chicagoans with the discussion and later passage of immigration restrictions. Much of the rhetoric prohibitionists used was laced with xenophobic and nativist sentiments. Foreign groups did not let this fact go unnoticed. Further, the Klu Klux Klan's endorsement of Prohibition helped to strengthen the association of the Eighteenth

²⁹Buenker, John D. *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973) 371-373; *Chicago Tribune*, 1 September, 12 November, 1919.

³⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 8 July, 1919.

³¹*Chicago Daily News*, 1 July, 1919.

³²Perry Duis, *The Saloon*, Chapters Two and Three.

Amendment with bigotry and hatred in the minds of black, Catholic, and Jewish Chicagoans.³³

Industrial laborers, a faction overlapping with immigrant residents, interpreted the law as a direct assault. Prohibition exacerbated what was already a tumultuous time for industrial relations. Rumors of working-class revolt and the proliferation of socialism or anarchism if the law passed persisted for months. Many commentators claimed of a growing bolshevism movement in Chicago tied to opposition to Prohibition.³⁴ For many labor leaders, the issue took on an even greater level of class significance, as wealthier residents stocked up on liquor before the law went into effect. Samuel Gompers, the moderate head of the American Federation of Labor, decried the criminalization of alcohol because he believed it would radicalize workers. Indeed, local unions and their saloon-owner allies threatened a general strike following the amendment's passage. Many workers wore "No Beer, No Work" buttons after a button manufacturing company in Chicago tried to cash in on the sentiment. Opponents of the Eighteenth Amendment soon wore them nationwide. The phrase, along with "No Beer, No Coal, became the catchphrase of the laboring class' opposition across the country. The antagonism fomented in late 1919 when many working-class men from Chicago made their way to a march in Washington D. C. to protest on Pennsylvania Avenue where they were

³³Andrew Sinclair examined the xenophobic element of Prohibition in *Prohibition: Era of Excess* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1962), Chapters One to Three.

³⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 8 January, 15 June, 1919.

met by James Coxey, the leader of another march a generation earlier.³⁵

Many laboring drinkers developed a deep resentment toward both the federal government and the wealthy as the result the criminalization of alcohol. Although the Chicago Federation of Labor's publication *The New Majority* remained largely silent on the issue, workers nonetheless were upset. As one Italian worker told the *Tribune*, "the pleasure of eating and drinking and lingering over my three or four glasses of wine . . . is the humanizing hour of the day for me with my family and friends. I resent it bitterly having that stimulating hour legislated out of my life."³⁶ Editorial cartoonist John T. McCutcheon of the *Tribune* believed that Prohibition "fanned the flames of class prejudice. The poor man who wants a drink can't get it, and he reads, every day about the large private stocks laid in by the rich. It makes him sore. It looks like favoritism, and puts him in a bitter and resentful mood."³⁷

While Prohibition was designed to increase worker morale and productivity, it immediately appeared to have the opposite effect. Soon promises of worker unrest came to fruition. Laborers at the McCormick International Harvester Company and the Crane Company, under the Federal Union, launched a "mystery strike," meaning the strikers made no specific demands. Agitation spread to other workers and soon the entire city was in the midst of labor strife.³⁸ Many observers

³⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 21 February, 3, 7, 13 March, 1919, 16 January, 1920.

³⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 2 December, 1919.

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 22 July, 1919; *The New Majority*, 3, 10, 17, 24 January, 1920.

³⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 22 July, 1919.

pointed to the dry law as a cause for the conflict. One worker for the Crane Company explained that before July 1 "the organizers hadn't had a chance with the common workingman. They couldn't be stirred up in mass. July 1 brought discontent, and beerless, the workers were easy meat for the organizers." Alderman of the First Ward Michael "Hinky Dink" Kenna claimed that most workers saw Prohibition "as an infringement of their freedoms" and believed that "beer [had] more to do with [the strikes] than bolshevism."³⁹

Many commentators agreed with Kenna concerning the relationship between Prohibition and the strikes. One writer to the *Tribune*, who claimed to be close to industrial workers, explained how the criminalization of alcohol fueled class resentment. Many workers did not know why they should "work and sweat when a lot of parasites, men who produce nothing but hot air and who create nothing but trouble, rob [them] of the right to enjoy life in [their] own fashion." Beer was "the immediate reward of hard labor" and now that it was gone, tensions mounted.⁴⁰ Samuel Gompers explained the situation: "Instead of sitting over his pitcher of beer, he goes into the streets to meet other men restless and unsettled as himself. They rub together their mutual grievances and there are sparks and sometimes fire." Despite these claims, Prohibition was not in actuality the primary cause of the strikes. Instead, they were part of a nationwide effort among trade unions in 1919 to gain an eight-hour day, higher wages, and greater political sway in local

³⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 27 July, 1919.

⁴⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 24, 26 September, 1919.

governments.⁴¹

The strikes were not the only outburst of violence in July 1919 that observers linked to the abolition of alcohol. By August, H. G. Wells, wondering "who's looney now?" cited the prevalence of "murders, race riots, and strikes," that had all occurred despite Prohibition.⁴² At the end of July, the worst racial turbulence in the city's history began. While some commentators blamed the violence on a dry city, others believed that it would have been a lot worse with a saloon on every corner.⁴³ Fears of revolution and violence, however, proved unwarranted. Eventually the unrest subsided, as the ability to buy and sell alcohol resumed illegally. Most workers and city residents turned to the criminal underworld more than the ideologies of communism or anarchy in response to the illegalization of alcohol.

Chicago's immigrant and laboring population was not the only critic of the Eighteenth Amendment. Opposition came in many forms from middle- and upper-class residents of the city. A week before wartime Prohibition arrived, the Association Opposed to the National Prohibition Amendment set up an office in the Auditorium Building. The Chicago organization included a number of prominent men in finance, labor, and industry. The presidents of many tobacco companies were on the board of directors, as they were trying to prevent what they believed to

⁴¹*Chicago Tribune*, 4 November, 1919; *The New Majority*, 3 January, 1920.

⁴²*Chicago Tribune*, 17 August, 1919.

⁴³*Chicago Tribune*, 17 August, 1919.

be the next step for morality crusaders: the elimination of tobacco.⁴⁴

The city's religious authorities were divided on the alcohol question. While Protestant churches for the most part stood ardently behind the Eighteenth Amendment and were a major force behind its passage, some ministers opposed it. German-based Lutheran churches were particularly vocal. Local Catholic leaders were less devoutly dry as well. George Cardinal Mundelein believed the electorate should vote on the issue if Prohibition was to happen at all. He saw the amendment as "fomenting class hatred."⁴⁵

City and county leaders never fully submitted to the idea of Prohibition or its enforcement. Chicago's wets maintained a significant amount of political support from both Republicans and Democrats. The municipal government even attempted to halt enforcement. Less than two months after the Eighteenth Amendment took effect, the city council voted fifty-one to ten for a resolution that requested that the Illinois legislature rescind its approval of the amendment and submit the question to a referendum. Those aldermen who voted against the resolution were forced to defend themselves before angry constituents. Public officers, however, were not always blatantly wet due to the influence of dry organizations in elections. Politicians of all parties walked a tight line between wet and dry voters and often solved the issue by advocating legalization of light beers and wines, while also

⁴⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 23 June, 1919.

⁴⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 20 March, 1 April, 1919.

supporting the enforcement of Prohibition laws.⁴⁶

Chicago's most vocal opponent of Prohibition was Democratic alderman Anton Cermak. Cermak was no newcomer to Chicago politics. As a Bohemian-born immigrant who worked as a coal miner as a child, his rise into politics was unusual. While mining in Braidwood, Illinois, he met George E. Brennan, "one of the big cogs in the Roger Sullivan," organization of the local Democratic Party and later started his own coal business with Brennan's assistance. Building a following in the Twelfth Ward among the younger Czech community, Cermak climbed the ranks of the Sullivan organization. In 1902, he won election to the state legislature and later served as an alderman for the Twelfth Ward. Cermak also delved into real estate and banking, establishing the Lawndale Building and Loan Association. In the 1906, Cermak became an instrumental figure in the United Societies for Local Self Government (USLSG), an organization formed for the purpose of opposing charter reform in the city. The USLSG later battled against dry organizations and was the first group to actively urge the election of wet candidates. The USLSG vowed to fight the amendment and believed a dry Chicago was nothing but a "mirage." Later, in 1912, Cermak was elected chief bailiff of the city courts. In 1918, Cermak ran for Cook county sheriff but lost. In 1922, he won the presidency of the Cook County Board of Commissioners and in 1928 he became chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party.⁴⁷

⁴⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 11 March, 1920, 30 November, 1930.

⁴⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 9 June, 1919, 30 August, 6 March, 1933. For history of United Societies for Local

Cermak was Chicago's most vocal opponent of the Eighteenth Amendment. The city looked to him as the "the wettest of its kind between the two oceans." By 1920, the Czech-language *Denni Hlasatel* characterized Cermak as the dry's biggest enemy and the city's champion for liberty. While many public figures were reluctant to renounce the law's enforcement, Cermak openly stated his opposition to federal agents. He also assisted distillers in their court battles.⁴⁸ Cermak heavily criticized Mayor Bill Thompson for agreeing to use the local police force to enforce the federal law (despite the fact that city officer made very few arrests). His relationship to the alcohol business was not characteristic of many Chicago politicians. Even dries acknowledged that he did not have strong ties to brewers, distillers, and saloonkeepers like many other alcohol proponents.⁴⁹

A major component of the antagonism to Prohibition came from the local media. While many news organs were reluctant to renounce the amendment, a number of papers denounced it early on. The *Chicago Tribune*, traditionally an ally of dries, became increasingly critical as Prohibition approached and was even more so after it took effect. Foreign language newspapers notice this change of view on part of the *Tribune* (as well as the *Chicago Daily News*) and commended them for

Self-Government see Maureen Flanagan, "The Ethnic Entry into Chicago Politics: The United Societies of Local Self Government and the Reform Charter of 1907," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 75 (Spring 1982), 2-14.

⁴⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 19 April, 1919; *Denni Hlasatel*, 19 February, 1920, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 1, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

⁴⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 19 April, 1919, 13 October, 2 November, 1931.

it.⁵⁰ The *Tribune's* editors and columnists deplored the ban on alcohol from the beginning. "Help win the former war. Stand by our recent allies. Straf [sic] the late Hun with lemonade. We must win the past war at any cost," the *Tribune* columnist Jack Lait penned mocking the coming of the "wartime" measures.⁵¹

The *Tribune's* president and co-editor, Colonel Robert McCormick, was determined to make the paper into the "World's Greatest Newspaper" and orchestrated its large-scale growth. He constructed an opposition to the Eighteenth Amendment that provided much of the reason for the paper's dramatic increase in circulation during the 1920s. The *Tribune* analyzed Prohibition as an unnecessary breach of personal liberty brought about by industrialists concerned about worker discipline and increased profits. The editor described the situation soon after the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment: "Capitalism has indicated its preference for sobriety. What it wants is reliable automata to sit at machines and make profits. Capitalism wants a placid householder, a workman who spends his leisure in slippers or in bed, and works, when he works, as if he were a oiled machine intent upon his employer's dividends."⁵²

Following the passage of the amendment, the *Tribune* wondered if it was necessary. An editorial stated that a change in the "organic" law (the constitution)

⁵⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 12 January, 1919; *Denni Hlasatel*, 19 February, 1920, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 1, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

⁵¹*Chicago Tribune*, 1 July, 1919.

⁵²*Chicago Tribune*, 2 February 1919, 12 October, 1925.

was not needed, merely an act of Congress. The paper also understood the impossibility of changing the behaviors that were so ingrained in American culture and traditions. After observing intoxicated revelers welcome in 1920, an editorial declared that Prohibition had "made a fraud of law" by increasing "the natural American insolence toward the law." The amendment had "made ten law breakers where it found one," the newspaper lamented. Such notions became more accepted throughout the decade.⁵³

The *Tribune's* stance, however, was complicated. McCormick, inherently a conservative editor, wanted to see the saloon eliminated. He and his co-editor Joseph Patterson sensed a problem related to public drinking and the flood of eastern and southern Europeans into the city. The paper often spoke of the dangerous "foreign element" in Chicago. However, McCormick and Patterson did not believe Prohibition was the correct manner in which to cure the problem. Before a municipal local-option election, the *Tribune* told its readers to vote against the law. Many of the paper's writers agreed, although not all of them. Internal disputes within the pages of the *Tribune* were frequent. Other writers, such as Dr. W. A. Evans, strongly supported Prohibition and advocated it in his columns, making him a figure of derision amongst wets.⁵⁴

The *Tribune* particularly worried about the direction the country was heading in stemming personal liberties and civil rights. As one editorial explained it,

⁵³*Chicago Tribune*, 2 January 1920, 25 December, 1921.

⁵⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 23 July, 1919, 12 October, 1925.

"the prohibition movement is merely the first step in a series that will place us all under a regime of puritanical tyranny".⁵⁵ The paper's readers agreed. "Away with their recreation centers, and their pop, slop, and coffee!! Away with Bill Bryan, Billy Sunday, and all their tribe who have done incalculable harm in fomenting the spirit of discontent amongst the working classes, against whom this iniquitous legislation is aimed," one writer to the *Tribune* exclaimed. Soon the mere act of purchasing and consuming an alcoholic drink became a critical gesture and expression of personal freedom.⁵⁶

Local prohibitionists and moral reformers fumed at the *Tribune's* stance. They were particularly upset with the paper because of its rapidly increasing audience. Drys believed that because of the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, the debate over alcohol was over. Anti-alcohol leaders E. J. Davis, F. Scott McBride, Dr. Philip Yarrow, Arthur Burrage Farwell, and other reformers continually wrote the paper denouncing the *Tribune's* treatment of them.⁵⁷ Chicago drys blamed the *Tribune* for widespread violations. The Illinois Anti Saloon League expressed their disapproval during a meeting in Springfield a month and a half before wartime Prohibition began, when the group resolved that the *Tribune* should cease lending "its news columns to stories that . . . persistently use its editorial space to slur, sneer at, discredit, and if possible, defeat the successful enforcement of the national

⁵⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 19 February, 1919.

⁵⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 20 June, 1919.

⁵⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 19 May, 1919.

prohibition amendment." The newspaper, the resolution continued, was "a menace to orderly government" and a major reason for "disunion, lawlessness, anarchy, and riot" ⁵⁸ Many writers accused the paper of advocating "the cause of outlaws." The once cozy relationship between moral reformers and the city's press fissured as the dream of a dry city became a reality. ⁵⁹

Other newspapers expressed the frustrations and anger of immigrant groups and working-class Chicagoans. Foreign language newspapers provided the most criticism. Before one city local-option vote, many newspapers ran advertisements encouraging citizens to reject Prohibition. The ads described drys as "prohibition dictators who . . . rob you of your freedom." One contained a picture of a clergyman carrying a warrant of search and seizure entering a laborer's home at night, expressing many residents' fear of the violation of their private property. In addition to the loss of freedom, they were also concerned about the great loss of work opportunities in the alcohol industry. The city's Bohemian press was the most fervent in expressing their rage toward the law. ⁶⁰

Prohibition split the black media and community in Chicago. The city's newspapers operated by African American Chicagoans were reluctant to make criticisms. *Chicago Defender* editor Robert Abbott supported the Eighteenth

⁵⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 16 May, 1919.

⁵⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 4 February, 12, 17 November, 1919.

⁶⁰Articles in other newspapers mentioned in *Chicago Tribune*, 6 May, 1919; *Denni Hlasatel*, 17 April, 1917, 27, 1921, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Boxes 1, 2, and 5, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

Amendment because he believed if black residents adopted conservative values, they would achieve civil rights quicker. Weeks before the beginning of wartime Prohibition, a *Defender* editorial claimed there were “thousands of arguments why we should dispose with intoxicants, but not one logical reason for keeping them on the market.”⁶¹ Another *Defender* editorial praised the coming of wartime Prohibition stating, “the best that can be said about liquor is that it is the root of all evil. Its passing has marked a long forward stride in civilization”⁶² The newspaper dispensed with arguments that the Eighteenth Amendment “restricts man’s rights and privilege” and worried instead about “the innocents who suffer[ed] through drinker’s indiscretions.”⁶³

The *Defender*, however, was less enthusiastic about prohibitionists' morality. The newspaper both promoted entertainment in the city's Black Belt and expressed discontent over the increase in crime in the district. The paper's editors often accused reformers of racism and challenged their fears of interactions between blacks and whites. The *Defender's* support of Prohibition continued through the 1920s, advocating the enforcement of the law instead of repeal or modification (although by the 1930s, they had changed their stance). Quarrels were frequent between the *Defender* and the *Tribune*. When the *Tribune* compared the non-enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment to that of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth

⁶¹*Chicago Defender*, 7 June, 1919.

⁶²*Chicago Defender*, 5 July, 1919.

⁶³*Chicago Tribune*, 33 January, 1921.

Amendments, the *Defender's* editors responded by criticizing the *Tribune* for supporting the “nullification” of the Eighteenth Amendment.⁶⁴

Much of the wets' criticism was directed at the Anti Saloon League and other dry organizations. Many commentators criticized the League using adjectives such as “bigoted,” “fascist,” “tyrannical,” and “puritanical.” Those against the amendment felt the Anti Saloon League had taken over both political parties, calling both the Republicans and Democrats “wings of the Prohibition party.”⁶⁵ Apathy toward the voting process increased along with cynicism. Prohibitionists meanwhile tried to paint the entire alcohol trade as “members of the underworld, crooks, and criminals,” while wets tried to distance alcohol from criminality and drunkenness.⁶⁶

Many letters written to newspapers associated the anti-alcohol movement with the increase in women's social standing in the early twentieth century. This tie between temperance and females provided reason for many men to oppose women voting in the early decades of the twentieth century. Following the advent of wartime Prohibition, a misogynistic backlash emerged. Liquor-loving men particularly blamed suffrage for the newfound power of drys.⁶⁷

The fear of government agents coming into one's home to search for alcohol was a particular concern. The *Defender* predicted “a demonstration the like of

⁶⁴*Chicago Defender*, 31 May, 1919.

⁶⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 22 January, 1920.

⁶⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 7 December, 1919.

⁶⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 24 June, 1919; Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 105.

which they will not soon forget" if Illinois passed the Search and Seizure Act, the state law meant to enforce Illinois local-option laws and national Prohibition. "It must not be forgotten," the *Defender's* editor wrote, "that the idea of a man's home being his castle is very deeply ingrained in the American mind, and the wild men who are screaming at the legislature in an attempt to pass this bit of nefarious legislation will find themselves about as hated as the red-coated minions who played this game when this country was young" (referring to the British during the American Revolution).⁶⁸

One of the city's most forthright voices who defended violators was attorney Clarence D. Darrow. "The spirit of human liberty never ran so low in the world or in America as it does today," he wrote in 1919.⁶⁹ In the early years of the Eighteenth Amendment, Darrow became one of the more radical thinkers on the subject. While many wet commentators believed enforcement was the best way to deal with Prohibition, Darrow ardently claimed that the law was falsely pushed on the public without their permission, thus government had no responsibility to enforce it.⁷⁰ Those who violated the law, he believed, were merely doing their duty as citizens to uphold their constitutional liberties. He defended numerous men and women over the next fourteen years. A number of underworld leaders, including criminal entrepreneurs Terrance Druggan and Frankie Lake, hired Darrow to represent them

⁶⁸*Chicago Defender*, 31 May, 1919.

⁶⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 24 March, 1919.

⁷⁰Clarence Darrow, *The Ordeal of Prohibition* (Chicago: Little Blue Book, 1925), Chapter One.

in court.⁷¹

Dry advocates, such as economist Irving Fisher, responded to such critics by claiming that a dry country would ultimately provide more freedom for individuals by removing alcohol. All laws in fact, Fisher argued, inherently stem personal liberty, thus Prohibition was no different in that respect. Numerous reformers and settlement house workers, such as Jane Addams and Grace Abbott, reiterated Fisher's arguments to help justify their support of the Eighteenth Amendment. Like many fellow prohibitionists, Addams saw dry laws as a chance to reduce spousal abuse and crime, prevent destructive influences—such as gambling halls and brothels—on children, and increase the wealth of ethnic families. Also like many of her contemporary dries, she viewed Prohibition as part of a progressive political agenda that would alleviate the suffering of lower-class residents.⁷²

The discussion assumed an added dimension as other counties debated and acted on the issue. Chicagoans carefully followed the actions of other nations as the American anti-alcohol movement sought to dry up the globe. Despite such sentiments as "America First" during the era, residents often paid close attention to how the rest of the world, particularly Europe, viewed the United States. Many commentators believed the Eighteenth Amendment was a sign that the nation was becoming less democratic. "We boast about our high standards of morality, but . . .

⁷¹*Chicago Tribune*, 15 May, 1924.

⁷²"The Prohibition Questionnaire," November 5, 1926, Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder "Prohibition," Chicago History Museum, Chicago; Irving Fisher, *Prohibition at Its Worst* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928).

in creating such laws as prohibition . . . we tell the world that we have very little trust in our ability to be morally stable," one writer named "Doubtful" wrote to the *Tribune*. "We kill the very opportunity to demonstrate that we possess backbone." Prohibition, he continued was "the most undemocratic act ever put over on any people . . . at a time when we boast about making the world safe for democracy." One writer to the *Tribune* lamented that "the British government, instead of curtailing the strength and quantity of the workingmen's beer, has increased it, thus demonstrating the folly of the legislation."⁷³ Municipal Judge Kickman Scanlan wondered why "in Europe there exists the greatest turmoil because the people there are seeking more liberties, while here we are" restricting freedoms more and more.⁷⁴

The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia particularly colored the discussion of Prohibition in the United States. When Russia became a dry nation in 1914 under Czar Nicholas II during World War I, dry reformers were enthusiastic and pointed to improved social and economic conditions as a reason for similar measures in the United States. The Bolshevik Revolution, however, altered how Americans viewed dry Russia. Prohibitionists were reluctant to use the nation as a model. Opponents of the Eighteenth Amendment argued that the attempted suppression of alcohol had actually caused the revolution. When the United States followed with their own dry measures, critics charged that the country was emulating the Bolsheviks in

⁷³*Chicago Tribune*, 20 June, 1919.

⁷⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 9 June, 1919.

restricting personal freedoms. The criticism only increased when the Soviet government turned wet in 1924, restoring the state monopoly of alcohol sales. If Bolsheviks could have their liquor, what did that say about American freedom? Wets continued to point to this liberty of Soviets that Americans did not enjoy until repeal.⁷⁵

While a large percentage of residents opposed the Eighteenth Amendment, others were law-abiding. Besides the members of the Anti Saloon League and other reform groups, a number of citizens supported a dry nation. Wives of alcoholic and abusive husbands hoped to prevent their spouses from attaining illegal booze as well. Other residents made efforts to eliminate alcohol from their own lives and hoped for improved prosperity and happiness. These supporters of the Eighteenth Amendment pushed city officials to eliminate the dominance of illegal alcohol selling. Nosy residents, who some small manufacturers and retailers described as “jealous,” informed enforcement agencies of neighbors’ illegal activities.⁷⁶

The issue divided immigrant communities in addition to the black population. For instance, many Italian residents wished to obey the law and hoped for social mobility. When their fellow Italian Chicagoans profited by selling alcohol within criminal organizations, they saw them as an embarrassment. The Jewish

⁷⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 11 October, 1916, 26 January, 1919, 25 October, 1925; *Russkii Viestnik*, 8, 11 December, 1924, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 48, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

⁷⁶Michael Willrich, “‘Close That Place of Hell’: Poor Women and the Culture Politics of Prohibition” *Journal of Urban History* 29 (2003), p. 555-574; Duis, *The Saloon*, 163; Transcript of Interview with Grace Licata, *Italian-American Collection*, Box 27, Folder 312, Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois in Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

press also supported the ban on alcohol, as they viewed the adoption of saloon-drinking customs as part of a negative process of Americanization by young Jews. A number of Poles supported Prohibition, as they were increasingly worried about the reputation of Polish Chicagoans. Polish newspapers had for years deplored drunkenness among Poles. Once Prohibition began, they were more ambivalent. The *Polonia* was often critical and questioned the Eighteenth Amendment's potential to cure the problem. Yet the paper lauded the ban on alcohol for its potential of reuniting and strengthening families by keeping fathers at home instead of the saloon.⁷⁷

Despite the widespread resistance, enforcement officers continued to investigate, arrest, and prosecute lawbreakers. Federal agents, county sheriff's officers, and the local police arrested tens of thousands of men and women in the Chicagoland area. No matter what position or the amount of power or protection one had, violators of Prohibition laws often found themselves in court. Not all lawbreakers arrested, however, went to trial. Many of those apprehended and brought before the United States Commissioner were later discharged.

The number of prosecuted charges increased every year. In the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois in Chicago, cases against 367 individuals began in 1920, 771 in 1924, 1,971 in 1928, and 2,026 in 1932 (Table 1).

⁷⁷For discussion of how many Italian residents were ashamed of Italian criminal leaders such as Al Capone see Humbert Nelli, *Italians in Chicago: A Study in Ethnic Mobility, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 121; *Daily Jewish Forward*, 6 February, 1926, *Polonia*, 1 May, 1919, 10 March, 11 September, 1921, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 48, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

Enforcement officials arrested thousands more men and women each year.

Federal agents served arrest warrants for 2,381 violators in 1922 in Chicago alone.

The number detained continued to grow during the decade. After 1927, when

George E. Q. Johnson became United States Attorney for the Northern District of

Illinois, the number of cases grew exponentially. Johnson was additionally able to

achieve a greater percentage of guilty verdicts. Over the fourteen years of

Prohibition, around fifteen thousand residents of the Northern District of Illinois

served fifteen hundred years

in prison and paid over two million dollars in fines.⁷⁸

Table 1. Enforcement of Prohibition Violations in the United States District

Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Illinois

Year	Number of Arrest and Search Warrants in Year	Number of Men and Women Charged in Year	Number of Guilty Verdicts in Year	Percent Convicted
1920	1,399	367	171	46.6%
1924	Incomplete data, not all dockets remain	771	485	62.9%
1928	2,081 (based on incomplete data; not all dockets remain)	1,971	1,317	66.8%
1932	2,547	2,234	1,795	80.3%

⁷⁸The yearly estimates are based on the Criminal Docket of the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, for years 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1932. Complete arrests records are found in the Commissioners' Dockets; however, these records are not complete and some dockets are missing for some years so it is difficult to estimate an exact count. The court charged approximately twice as many men and women with law violations as went to trial each year. Totals are from *Chicago Tribune*, 18 January, 1923, 20 December, 1933.

Federal enforcements agents within the Northern District of Illinois took violators to the Cook County Jail. As the 1920s progressed, the jails in Kane, Will, McHenry, Lake, Du Page, and DeKalb counties held offenders when the Cook County Jail filled to capacity. Judges usually granted bond, which usually cost anywhere between fifty and five thousand dollars. Lawbreakers were often dismissed; however, most went to trial after weeks or months. The most influential violators found guilty were sentenced to the House of Corrections if the sentence was less than a year and the federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas if it was over twelve months.

These newly convicted felons arose from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. They maintained disparate occupational and class statuses and originated from both inside and outside the former liquor industry. Saloonkeepers, wholesale liquor dealers, hotel owners, leisure business proprietors, politicians, policemen, doctors, lawyers, druggists, skilled and unskilled laborers, as well as a host of occupations unrelated to alcohol were involved in the clandestine liquor trade. However, the most successful leaders of the alcohol underworld were previously criminals before Prohibition and were usually involved in commercial sex, gambling, or robbery. The Eighteenth Amendment enabled them to enter a new enterprise in Chicago and elsewhere. The income levels of members of the illegal alcohol underworld are difficult to measure. Approximately thirty percent owned their own homes, while the remaining seventy percent either rented or lived with a family member. Many violators started the era renting small apartments and by the

Table 2. Demographic Data Relating to Chicago Area Residents Who Participated
in Illegal Alcohol Economy

Nationality	Number	Percent of Total	Percent Foreign Born	Men	Women	Percent Single, Widowed or Divorced	Percent Married	Home Owner- ship Percent
African American	44	5.7%	0%	41	3	23%	77%	17%
American	79	10.2%	0%	75	4	34%	66%	21%
Armenian	2	< 1%	100%	1	1	0%	100%	100%
Austrian	25	3.3%	76%	23	2	20%	80%	25%
Austrian-Jewish	2	< 1%	100%	2	0	0%	100%	50%
Belgian	2	< 1%	100%	2	0	0%	100%	50%
Bohemian/Czech	40	5.2%	85%	38	2	5%	95%	43%
Bulgarian	1	< 1%	100%	1	0	0%	100%	100%
Canadian	3	< 1%	33%	2	1	33%	66%	33%
Croatian	2	< 1%	100%	2	0	0%	100%	0%
Danish	3	< 1%	100%	3	0	33%	67%	0%
Dutch	3	< 1%	33%	3	0	0%	100%	66%
English	7	< 1%	60%	7	0	14%	86%	57%
Filipino	1	< 1%	100%	1	0	100%	0%	0%
German	101	13.1%	55%	93	8	20%	80%	45%
Greek	11	1.4%	100%	11	0	36%	64%	9%
Hungarian	16	2.1%	88%	15	1	25%	75%	13%
Irish	54	7.1%	70%	50	4	32%	68%	36%
Italian	126	16.4%	87%	122	4	28%	72%	43%
Japanese	1	< 1%	100%	1	0	100%	0%	0%
Latvian	3	< 1%	66%	3	0	0%	100%	0%
Lithuanian	28	3.6%	93%	24	4	32%	68%	43%
Mexican	1	< 1%	100%	1	0	100%	0%	0%
Norwegian	1	< 1%	100%	1	0	100%	0%	0%
Luxembourgian	4	< 1%	50%	4	0	50%	50%	75%
Polish	68	8.8%	88%	57	11	5%	95%	59%
Romanian	9	1.2%	78%	8	1	0%	100%	14%
Russian	29	3.8%	66%	28	1	15%	85%	28%
Russian-Jewish	24	3.1%	79%	24	0	33%	66%	29%
Scottish	2	< 1%	100%	2	0	50%	50%	50%
Slovakian	3	< 1%	100%	3	0	33%	66%	33%
Swedish	10	1.3%	60%	10	0	10%	90%	50%
Swiss	3	<1%	66%	2	1	0%	100%	33%
Turkish	1	< 1%	100%	1	0	100%	0%	0%
Yugoslavian	13	1.7%	92%	12	1	8%	92%	62%
Mixed Lineage	47	6.1%	13%	44	3	28%	72%	32%
Total	769	N/A	74.4%	717	52	29%	71%	34%

1930s owned homes outside the city center.

Violators of Prohibition laws derived from a variety of national and racial backgrounds (Table 2). At the aggregate level, a vast majority, almost seventy-five percent, were immigrants to the United States. Defendants came from a number of different countries; however, a handful of ethnic groups made up the majority of offenders. Based on arrests and prosecutions, no single ethnic group dominated any aspect of the illegal alcohol economy. The largest groups represented in the booze underworld, in descending order of prevalence, were Italians, Germans, native-born Euro-Americans, Poles, Irish, Russians, African Americans, Czechs, Lithuanians, and Austrians. Most lawbreakers came to the United States with faith in the nation's social system. They saw the United States and Chicago as a place of freedom and personal liberty. Most immigrants who participated in the alcohol trade wholeheartedly supported the nation's political and legal structure and chose to become naturalized within a decade of their arrival. Only when the country outlawed their professions and pastimes did they express irritation toward the United States. Many immigrants, in fact, moved back to their home countries after the advent of the Eighteenth Amendment.⁷⁹

Roughly a fifth of the lawbreakers were not immigrants but rather the sons

⁷⁹Commissioners' Dockets and Criminal Dockets for the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois for years 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1932; Papers of the Juvenile Protective Association, the Committee of Fifteen Papers, and the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily News*, and *Chicago Defender*. Commissioners' Docket, United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Volumes; Criminal Dockets, United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago.

and daughters of couples who had emigrated from Europe. These violators were often from the same ethnic groups as the immigrant lawbreakers but were represented in smaller numbers. A smaller number, around ten percent, of men and women arrested for Prohibition laws were the progeny of native-born Americans of Irish, German, Swedish, and English descent.

Chicagoans of all generations violated the National Prohibition Act. Most men and women who partook in the black market were between thirty and fifty during the first five years; however, by the late 1920s, more twenty-something year olds were violating the law. The average age of lawbreakers was approximately thirty-five in 1920. Some participants were adults who belonged to youth gangs in their teenage years. Unable or unwilling to profit in other ventures, they relied on the alcohol economy for their livelihood. While adults accused the younger generation of being the culprits when it came to over-intoxication, those Chicagoans born before the turn of the century made up the majority of those who broke alcohol laws. A new social category developed: the “Hiccupping Forties.” Men and women, who were well into their fourth or fifth decade of living, operated and attended illegal drinking establishments.⁸⁰

More than ninety percent of the participants in the trade were men. Traditional nineteenth-century proletarian ideas about manhood contributed to the popularity of the underworld. The criminal world was a common arena for working males to display their masculinity through the attainment of wealth and

⁸⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 5 June, 1933.

demonstrations of power and violence. While born into modest beginnings, many men who entered the bootlegging business, especially criminal leaders, sought to gain great prosperity. As with other urbanite men in the 1920s, acquiring greater affluence became the primary goal for those in charge of the illegal alcohol networks. The motivation for willful participation in the illegal alcohol trade often stemmed from a need to fulfill the role of the breadwinner and support one's family. Over seventy percent of participants were married men and women. These couples tried to contribute to their material comforts for them and their children. They often looked at their involvement as a positive activity because it so often assisted them in attaining the lifestyle they desired as Americans. Home ownership outside the city center was the chief goal and selling illegal alcohol became the means to save up extra money to accomplish this ambition. Many participants in the illegal market achieved that goal because of their extra income as lawbreakers. While different men showed their wealth in different ways, a chief motivation for all was a display of material goods.⁸¹

Women participated in the underground alcohol economy as well. Between five and ten percent of illegal alcohol workers were women. Many females resorted to pre-industrial practices of contributing to their family's wealth. By manufacturing moonshine, beer, or wine, women revived a component of the domestic economy that large distillery and breweries businesses had undermined. Polish and German women participated at the greatest rate, as female contribution

⁸¹"Studs Terkel Comments and Presents Prohibition Program," *Studs Terkel Program*, WMFT Radio (Chicago: WMFT, 5 December, 1983).

to the trade was traditional in both ethnic groups. These women producers sold their product to both neighbors and syndicates.

As discussed above, opposition to Prohibition in Chicago thus did not come from a single class, ethnic, or religious group but instead sprang from residents of a variety of backgrounds. These residents viewed their crimes as their constitutional duty as American citizens. The wet-dry issue itself became a marker of identity. One's attitude toward the federal ban on alcohol began trumping ethnic and class barriers in order to create new social categories: "wet" and "dry." Prohibition worked to make one's stance on alcohol the center of various cultural conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, capital and labor, the city and the small town, and proponents of the "wide open" city and moral reformers. One's beliefs about alcohol ultimately mirrored the clash between the dominant values of discipline and self-control of the nineteenth century and the burgeoning mores of consumption and leisure of the twentieth century.

Due to the large segment of the population who opposed the Eighteenth Amendment in Chicago, it was doomed from the beginning. By the end of 1922, the *Tribune* claimed that the only result of Prohibition was the increased prices of alcohol (up to five times pre-Prohibition prices) and the reduction in its quality.⁸² Nonetheless, dry laws had another effect. A new pool of lawbreakers burgeoned because of the mass number of residents in Chicago who opposed the Eighteenth Amendment. Chicago became the "wettest" city between New York and the West

⁸²*Chicago Tribune*, 11 November, 1922.

Coast and built a reputation for having the most brutal and powerful underworld figures. Among the dozens of celebrity criminal leaders existed thousands of nameless men and women who produced, distributed, sold, and consumed illegal alcohol to construct one of the largest sectors of the metropolitan economy in the 1920s.

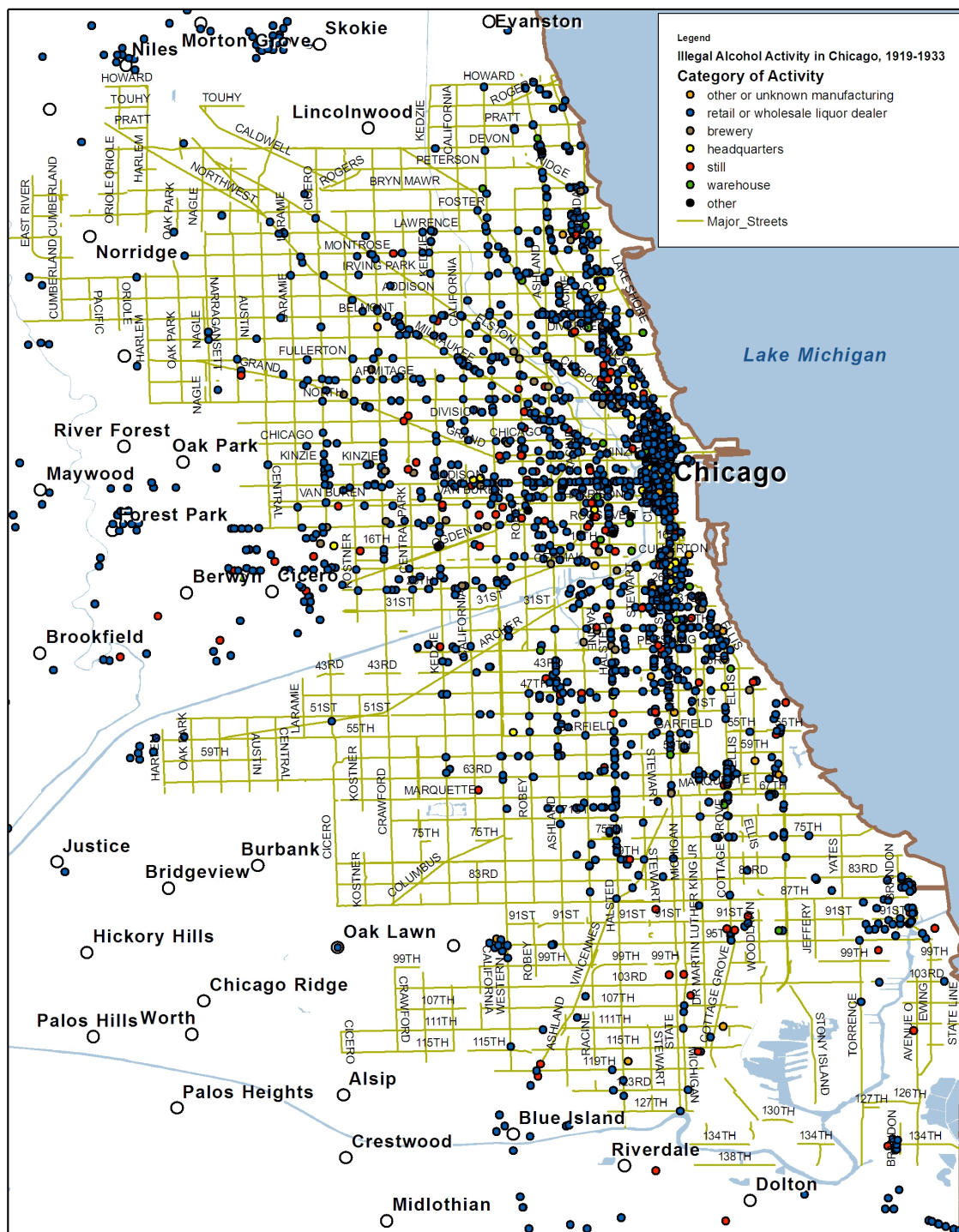
CHAPTER TWO

“NOTHING BUT BOOZE HERE WHEREVER YOU GO”

“Where is . . . bootleg liquor sold?” rhetorically asked Jane Addams to Chicago Commons Settlement House workers in the midst of Prohibition. “Everywhere,” she replied. “This answer knits the city into a unit as far as the guilt is concerned. If it is the foreigner who manufactures, it is the American in his hotel, his club, his suburban home, his lake front apartment who buys” it. Addams’ statement not only reflected the physical expansion of the illegal alcohol economy in Chicago but also hinted at the social and cultural stratification of a bootlegging underworld that included Chicagoans from a variety of backgrounds.¹

Prohibition’s impact was particularly shown in its affect on the spatial aspects of Chicago. The growth of places of illegal alcohol production, retail, consumption, and storage greatly influenced the city’s geographical development. While clusters of illegal businesses emerged in certain districts, the Eighteenth Amendment left no area unaffected (Figure 1). Illegal alcohol establishments became ubiquitous throughout the city almost instantaneously. They continued to multiply, decreasing only between 1923 and 1927 under reform mayor William Dever (Figures 2 to 5). Residents who lived in neighborhoods that were dry

¹“Study of Prohibition for the National Federation of Settlements,” 1926, Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder “Prohibition,” Chicago History Museum, Chicago.



before the Eighteenth Amendment and had to venture to other parts of the city to obtain alcohol were able to drink in open retail establishments in their own community. The underworld crept outside traditional “slums” into territories where criminal organizations previously held little sway. Syndicated networks that formerly adhered to single neighborhoods spread out to influence other areas of the city.²

The prevalence of drinking escaped few. Charles Zahara provided witness to the extent of drinking in dry Chicago. In the early 1920s, Zahara moved to the city from rural Staunton, Illinois to increase his opportunities in the world of business. By 1930, he was broke and in a constant state of intoxication. Offering a reason for his descent into alcoholism, Zahara stated he had believed he “could do well in Chicago” when he moved there. After he arrived, however, he realized that there was “nothing but booze here wherever you go. You can’t escape it.”³

The number of properties used for illicit purposes was astounding. By the end of 1933, the federal government padlocked more than six thousand establishments with a loss in rental fees above six million dollars. In all, it is reasonable to estimate that Chicagoans built well over twenty thousand sites of illegal drinking, manufacturing, and storage. As each site of unlawful activity often

²*Chicago Tribune*, 14 October, 29 November 1923, 21 March, 9 September 1928, 24 February, 1929. Mark Haller discussed the spread of alcohol venues into previously dry communities in “Urban Vice and Civic Reform: Chicago in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Cities in American History*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson and Stanley K. Schultz (New York: Knopf, 1972). See appendix for use of sources in maps and throughout dissertation.

³*Chicago Tribune*, 3 August, 1923, 10 September, 1931, 26 May, 1932.

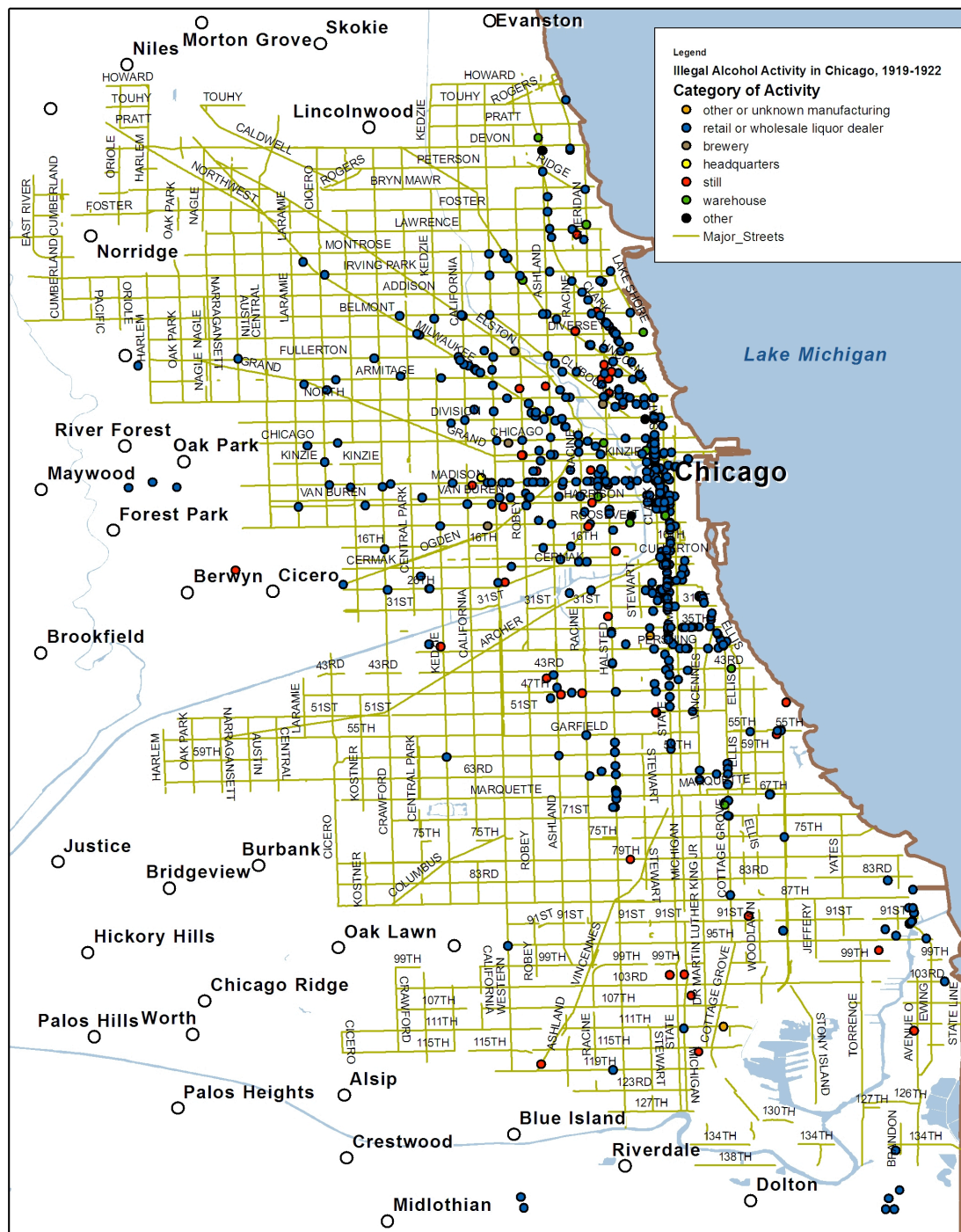


Figure 2. Map of illegal alcohol activity in Chicago from 1919 to 1922.

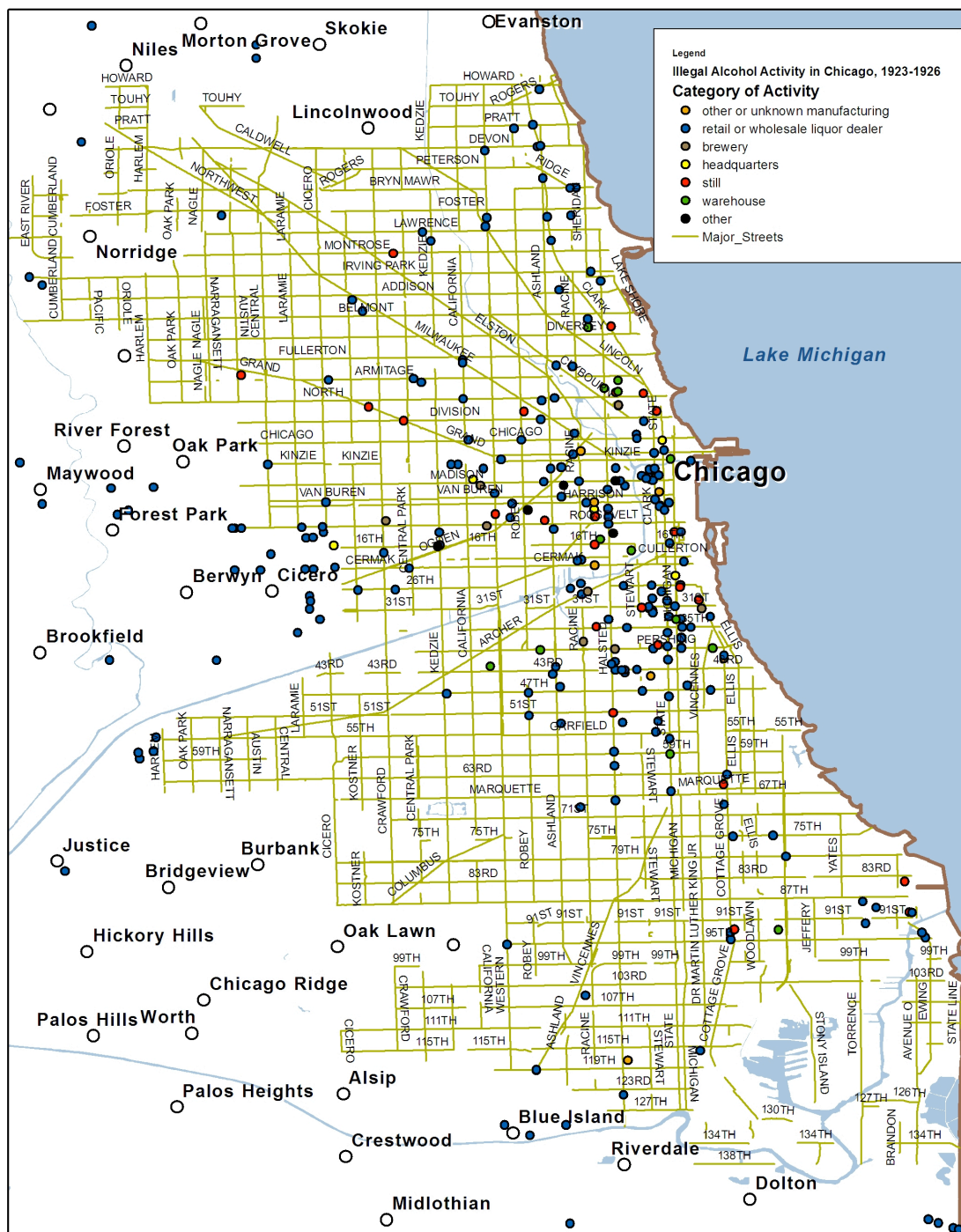


Figure 3. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in Chicago from 1923 to 1926.

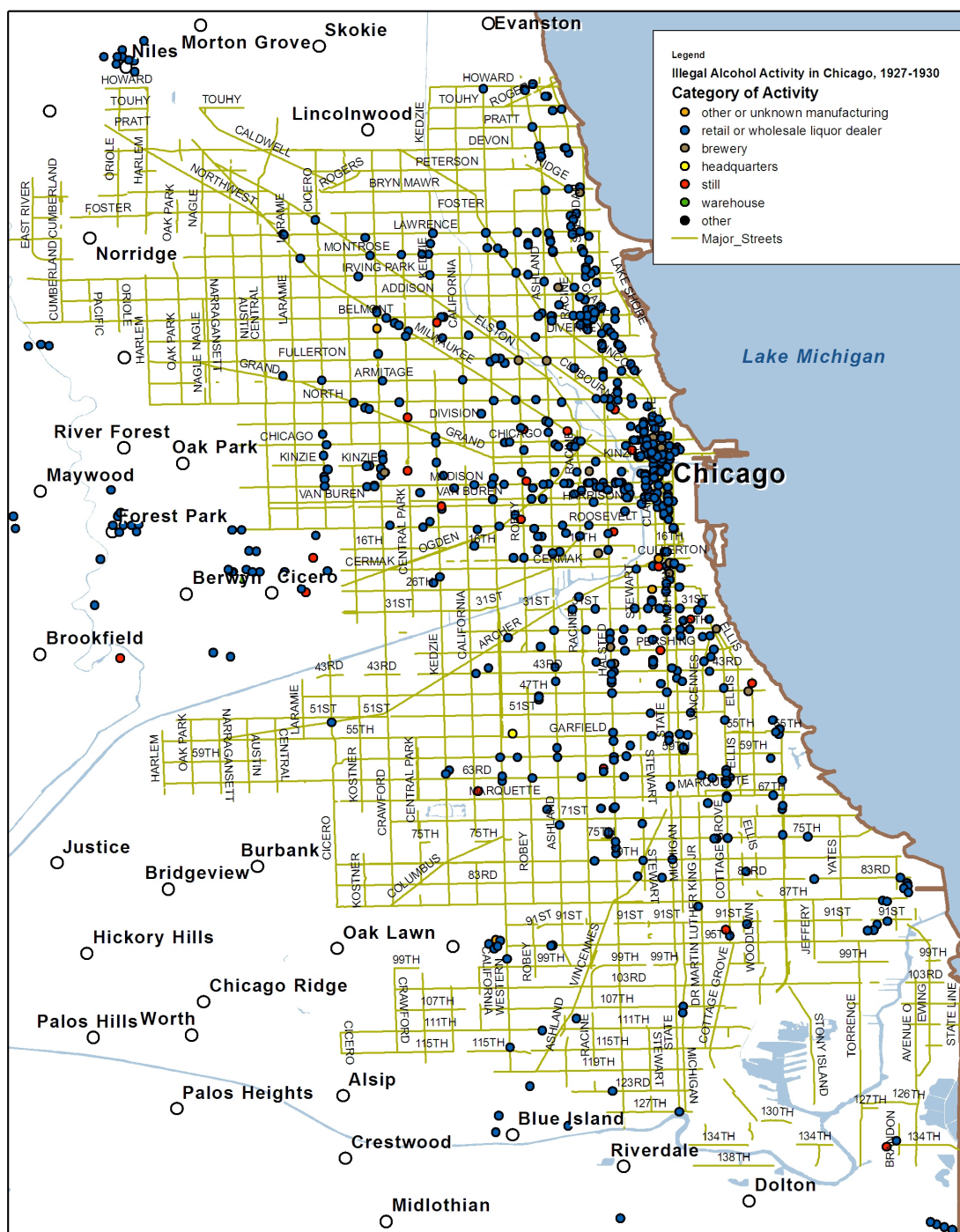


Figure 4. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in Chicago from 1927 to 1930.

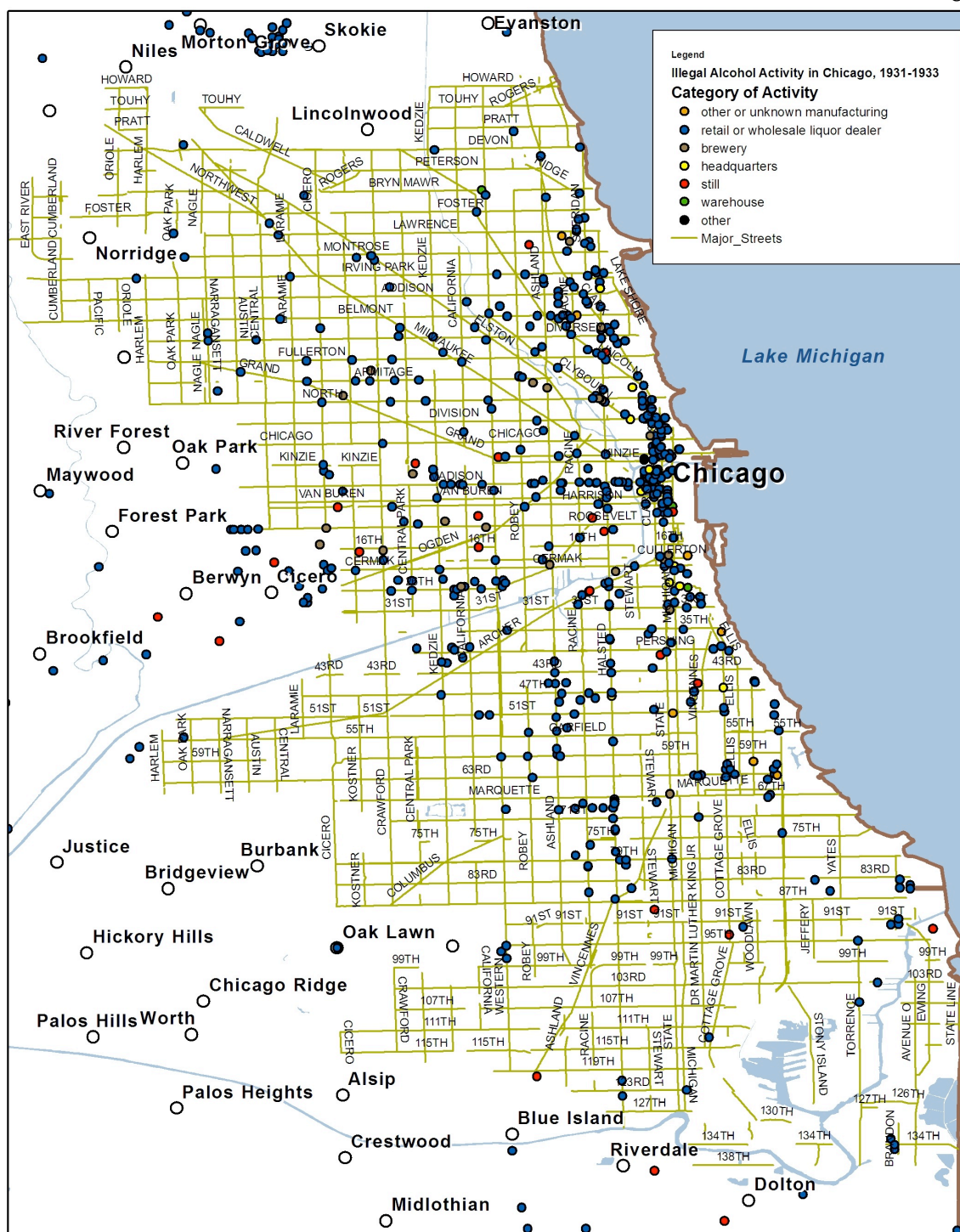


Figure 5. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in Chicago from 1931 to 1933.

required the assistance—either solicited or not—of a larger network, criminal leaders gained increasing influence in more vicinities.⁴

The city's social and cultural landscape influenced how the underground alcohol economy spread spatially. Chicago in the 1920s consisted of numerous disparate neighborhoods and communities. As such it was a "city of cities." The physical environment reflected the city's different classes and cultures. The manner in which the black market in alcohol evolved exhibited this fact. Retail and other establishments devoted to alcohol spread into each community in a different way. Social standing, ethnicity, and skin color all affected their spatial growth. Each district of the informal economy developed a distinct character and each catered to particular group of consumers. While some districts encouraged a more cosmopolitan ethos by attracting diverse groups of people to retail businesses, other areas sought to create a more homogeneous environment for patrons. Within the informal economy itself, no ethnic group completely controlled a particular area. The exchange of illegal alcohol most often provided an opportunity for residents from different neighborhoods, ethnic groups, and sexes to interact. The illicit market drew members of various social backgrounds together, instigating conflict but also resulting in harmonious relations.⁵

⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 17 October, 1929. Estimates for total of illegal sites is based on contemporary approximations and data from search warrants from Commissioners' Dockets, United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Record Group 21, Records of the United States District Court.

⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 23 November 1928; Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book* (Chicago: Chicago Recreation Commission, 1938), "Introduction."

This mass conversion of real estate into criminal territory provides a unique example in urban history of a disjuncture between what a building appeared to be and the purposes it actually served. Although the exteriors of most structures changed little, the happenings on the inside linked local neighborhood economies with the growth of the underworld. Many real estate owners were tolerant of lawbreaking renters and risked potential arrest, injunction suits, and the padlocking of their property. Landlords exploited the situation and doubled or tripled rents to as much as \$200 to \$300 for a standard flat when aware that the leaser was breaking the law. While criminal leaders owned some of the realty where illegal establishments arose, businessmen and banks controlled a large amount of the buildings. For instance, the Chicago Title and Trust Company possessed hundreds of structures where illicit activity occurred. Often real estate owners were not aware of the illicit trade. The Methodist Episcopal Church incidentally owned the property where a speakeasy operated on the North Side. Injunction suits further revealed that the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America held real estate where illegal activities occurred.⁶

Although consumers of alcohol easily could have chosen to drink in the security of their homes, the desire to imbibe with others led to the development of

⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 13 May, 1931, 3 October 1932.

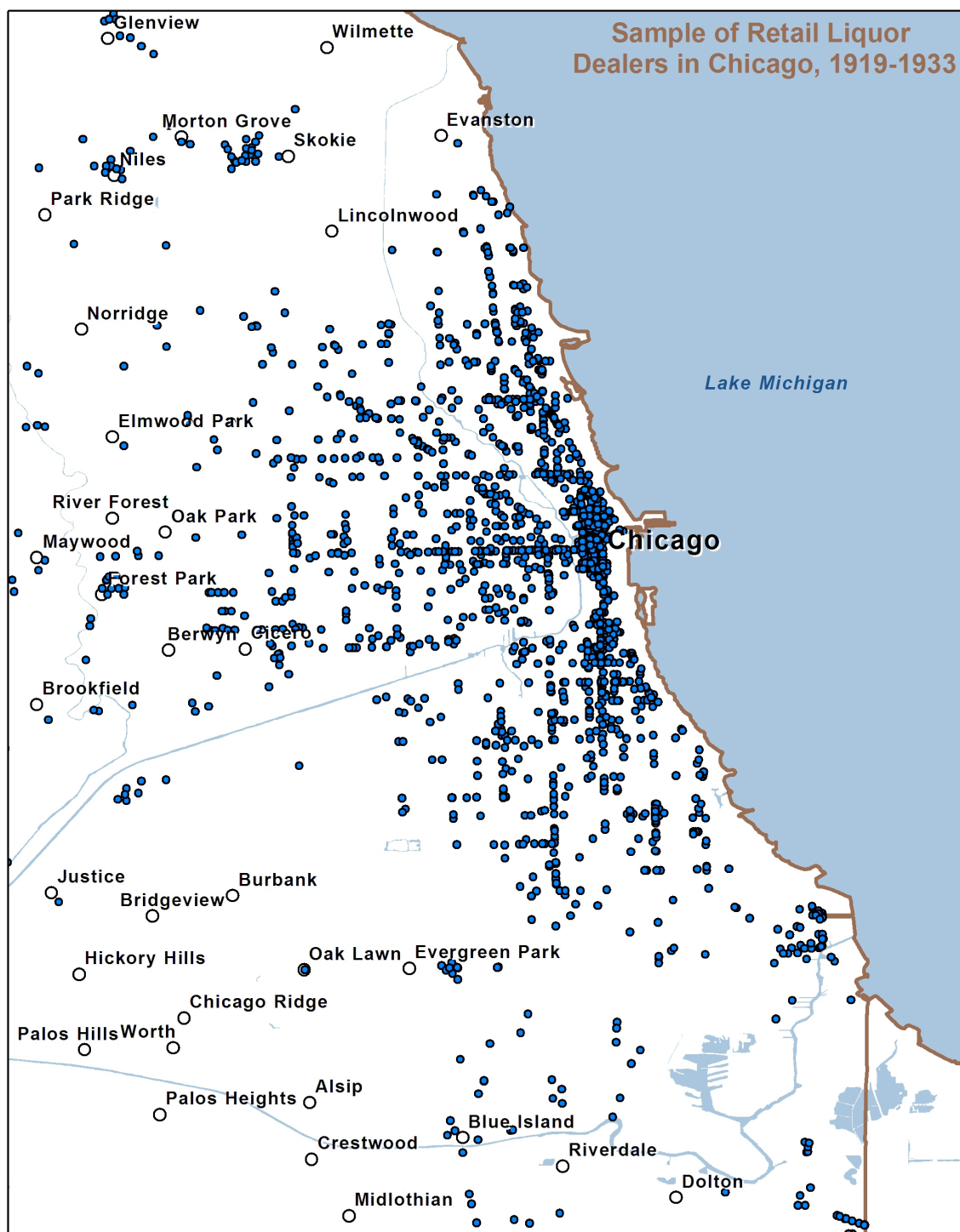


Figure 6. Map of Illegal Retail Alcohol Establishments, 1919-1933.

thousands of open commercial venues. All sorts of illegal drinking establishments proliferated, as the hopes for a legal replacement for saloons faded (Figure 6).

Retail took many forms: traditional saloons with open bars, secluded speakeasies, beer flats, soft drink parlors, cabarets, nightclubs, black and tans, restaurants, hotels, poolrooms, homes, and a number of other disguised stores. These venues were located in both traditional leisure districts surrounding movie theaters and department stores near transit lines and in more secluded residential areas. They were found next to schools, churches, and other commercial businesses. One study in 1931 found 194 speakeasies within two blocks of a school.⁷

While some illegal retail businesses were concealed and located away from the ground level, other venues—those that paid protection money—operated openly on the first floor with no reasons to disguise or alter how patrons entered their doors. In the first few years of Prohibition, many places still exhibited signs advertising they sold drinks. Other sites were more hidden, secretive, and had strict policies concerning how to conduct transactions. They were most often found away from the ground level, up stairways or down in basements. Often drinking occurred in rear rooms away from front windows. Many places added new doors, peep holes, secret hideaways, escape passages, and formulated quick methods to dump their alcohol. Some went as far as to operate behind locked doors. One tool to fool enforcement officers was to place a “For Rent” sign in the window and use the back

⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 12 August, 1931.

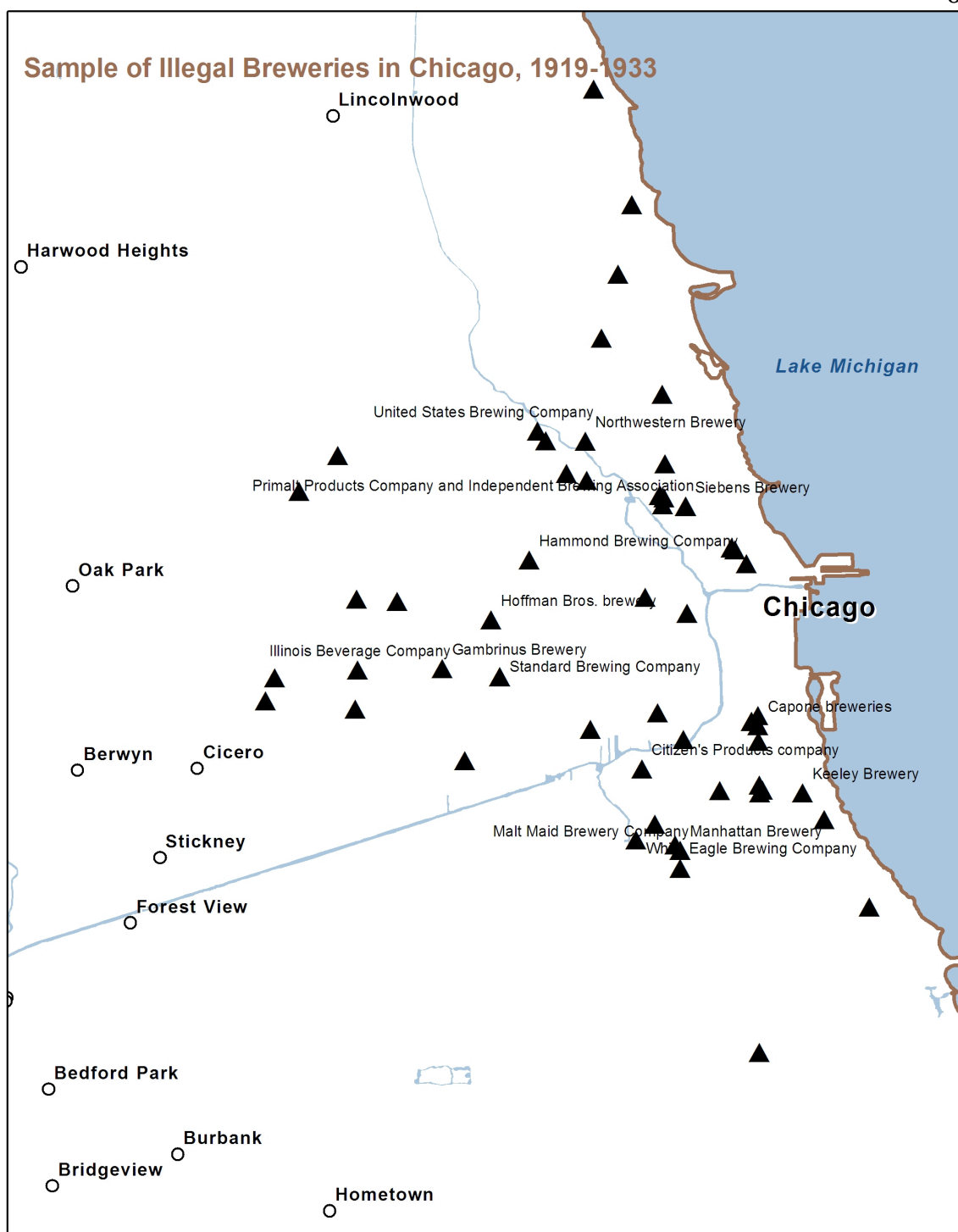


Figure 7. Map of Illegal Breweries, 1919-1933.

door as the main entrance. Some places run by larger criminal organizations maintained systems of tunnels as an avenue of escape. Retail establishments were not difficult to locate. Larger cabarets, nightclubs, and dance halls had throngs of people waiting outside. Smaller neighborhood businesses required special knowledge. Taxi drivers were a reliable source of information and customers often paid tips to those drivers who provided addresses. Once they arrived, patrons entered by way of a hidden door where a man looked out at them from a peephole. Visitors sometimes needed a password, such as "Joe sent me," to get by the door, although many places were more trusting and merely checked to make sure they were not cops.⁸

Thousands of stores additionally provided liquor for customers to take home with them. These were located almost everywhere: drug stores, barbers, candy stores, cigar shops, coffee houses, tearooms, furniture stores, hardware stores, ice cream parlors, soda fountains, and tailor shops. Many families sold alcohol directly from their homes to neighbors. Customers then used this liquor at home, which was legal under the Volstead Act, or brought it in a hip flask to places that served "set-ups," a glass with ice and a mixing beverage.⁹

Countless sites of production additionally developed. In the early years of Prohibition, many Chicagoans turned their homes into small breweries, stills, and wineries to provide for themselves and their neighbors (Figures 7 and 8). Later,

⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 10, 22 April, 1931, 23 April, 3 October, 1932.

⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 14 October, 1923.

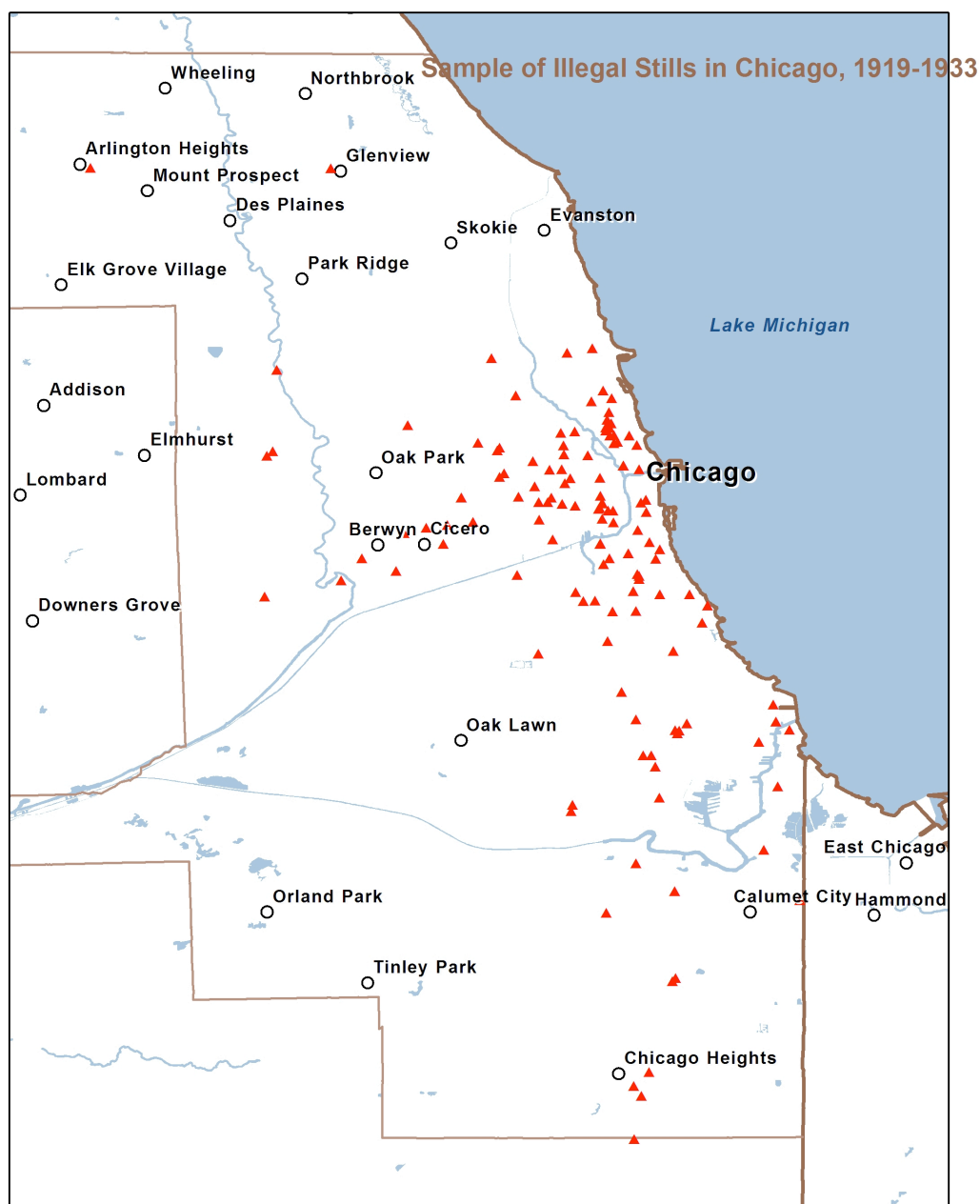


Figure 8. Map of Illicit Stills, 1919-1933.

however, the local illicit manufacturing industry advanced. Residents began producing alcohol for larger organizations that sold it to other areas. Criminal leaders additionally converted old barns, basements, backrooms of stores, and old warehouses into sites of manufacturing that employed dozens of men. Large

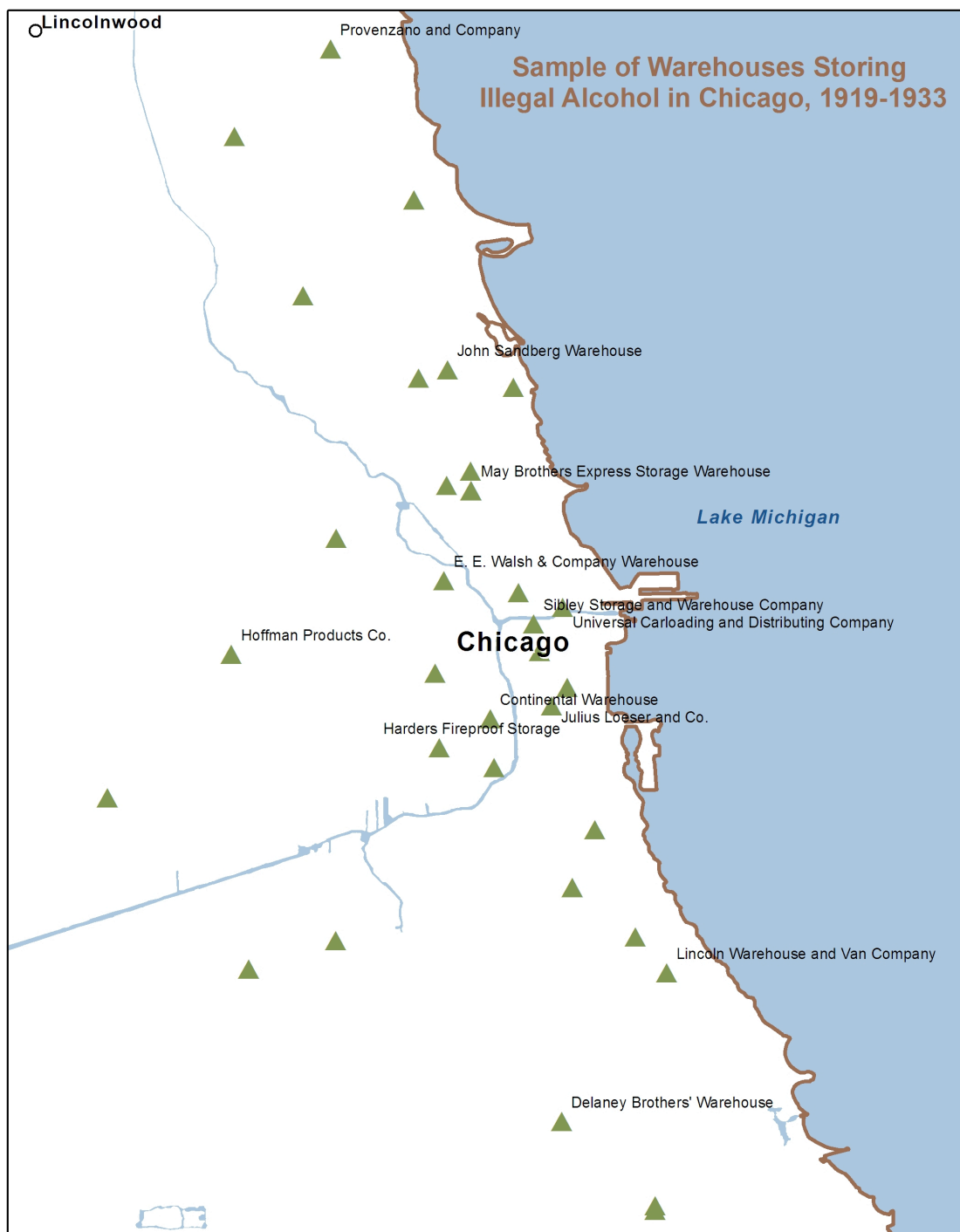


Figure 9. Map of Warehouses and Clearing Houses Used to Store Illegal Alcohol, 1919-1933.

breweries that thrived before the country went dry meanwhile came under the ownership of syndicated networks. Garages and warehouses across the city became storage spaces and clearinghouses (Figure 9).¹⁰

Just like other criminal ventures in the city, the illegal booze business was most intense in the city center and became less prevalent as one moved toward the periphery. The alcohol market initially became most entrenched in those central districts with wards where Mayor William Thompson's Businessmen and Businesswomen's Clubs—which functioned as a system of graft distribution—were most influential, particularly the old “river wards” (Figure 10). Networks of bribery were already prevalent among ward politicians and police stations in these districts. The communities of the Loop, the Near North Side, West Town, the Near West Side, the Near South Side, and New City had previously been centers of commercial sex, gambling, and other criminal elements.¹¹ Contemporary sociologist Frederic Thrasher saw these areas divided by geography into the “North Side jungles,” the “West Side wilderness,” and the “South Side badlands.” The following descriptions include these territories but provide greater detail by centering on official community areas developed by the University of Chicago in the 1920s. Areas participating in the booze underworld extended far from Thrasher's

¹⁰Study of Prohibition for the National Federation of Settlements,” 1926, Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder “Prohibition,” Chicago History Museum, Chicago; “Does Prohibition Work in Chicago?” Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder “Prohibition,” Chicago History Museum, Chicago.

¹¹For an analysis of Prohibition in the Packingtown section of New City see, Norman Sylvester Hayner, “The Effect of Prohibition in Packingtown,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1921).

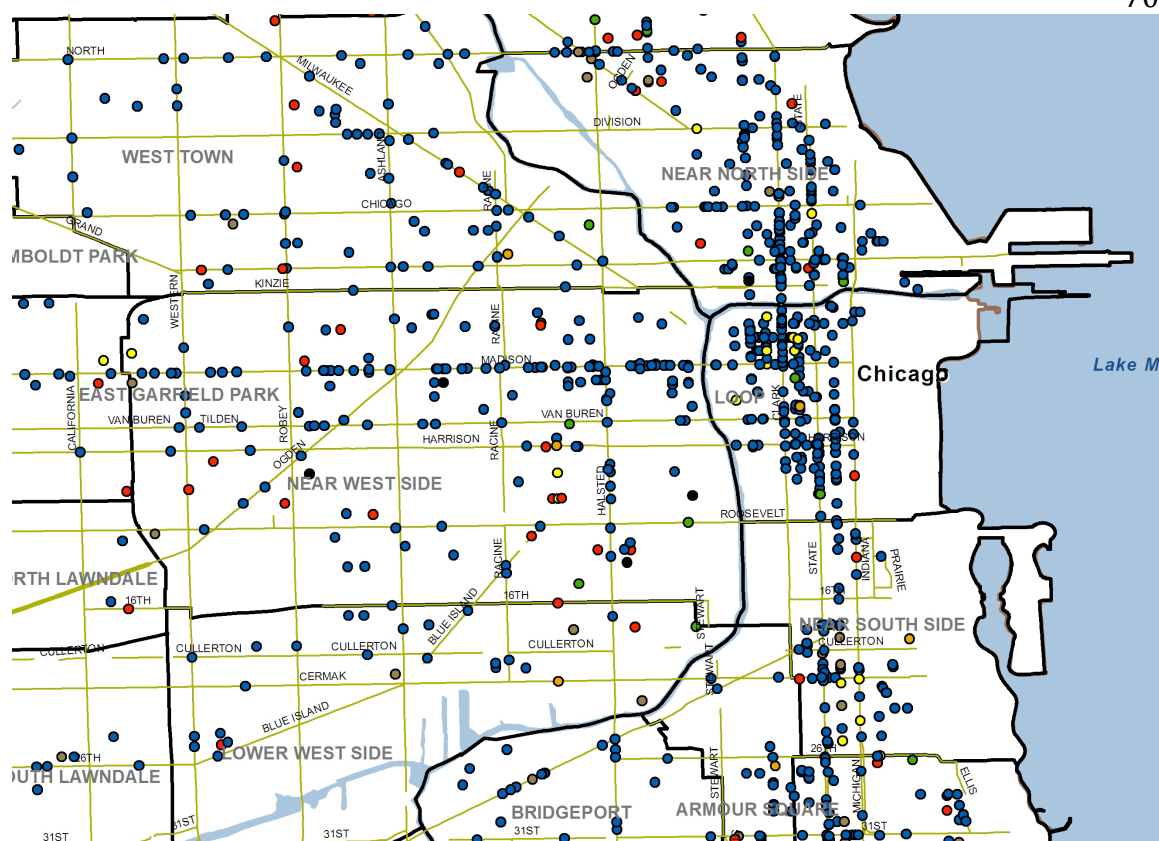


Figure 10. Map of Illegal Activity in City Center, 1919-1933.

boundaries. As Prohibition progressed, the underground economy expanded its grasp outside the city center into more residential neighborhoods and suburbs.¹²

The Loop had more places of illegal drinking than any other comparably sized area in the city (Figure 11 and 12). The area was almost completely commercial and few residents lived there in the 1920s. Chicagoans of all social standings worked in and passed through the Loop. Decorous hotels and lavish clubs were among the main attractions. Native-born Chicagoans, usually of German or Irish descent, ran most of the illegal operations. Saloons in the Loop had been more

¹²Frederick Thrasher, *A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), Chapter 1.

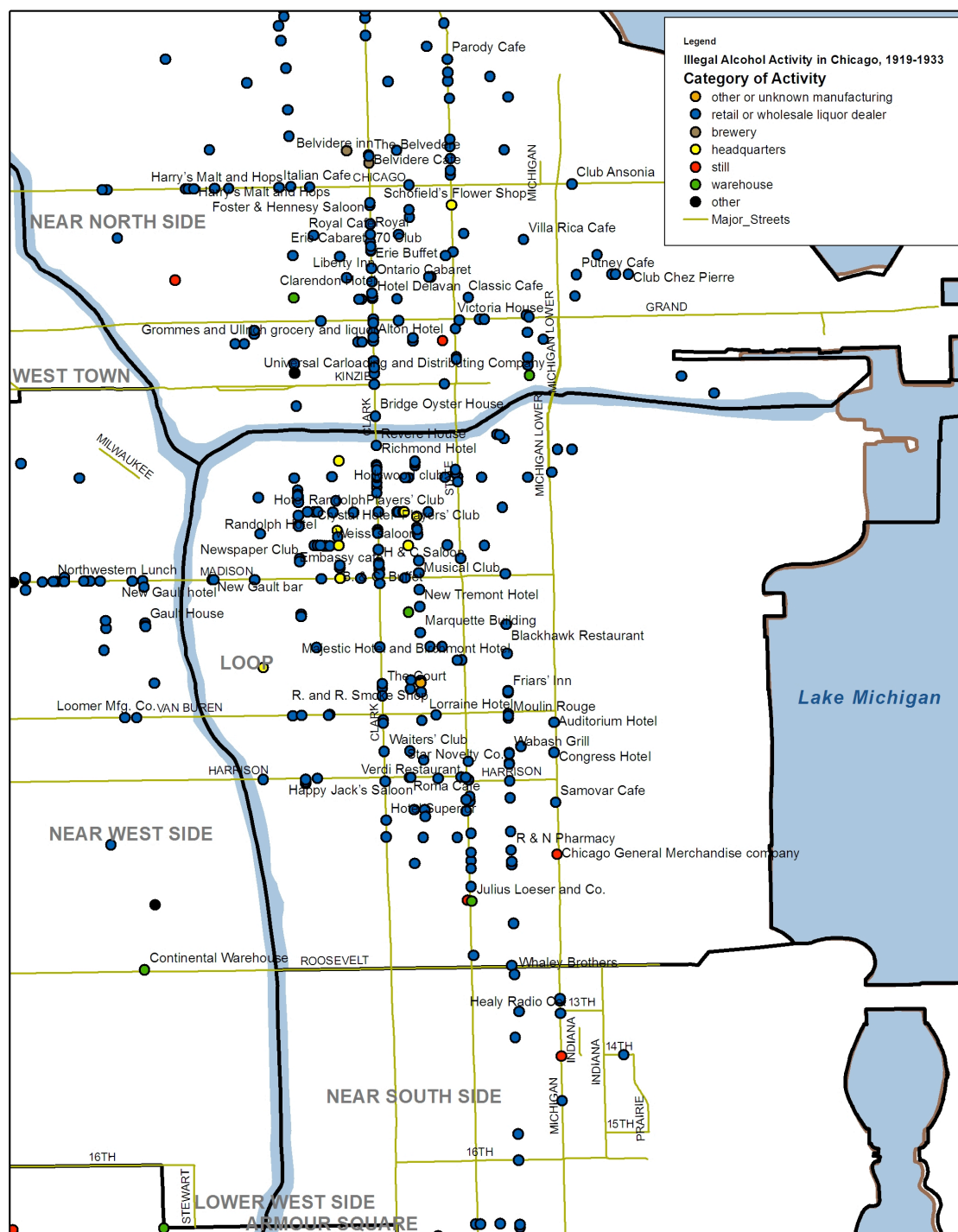


Figure 11. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in Loop, 1919-1933.



Figure 12. Photo of Loop Looking North on Clark Street from Madison Street (Chicago History Museum)

inviting to diverse ethnic groups before Prohibition and continued to be during the 1920s and 1930s. While saloons were prevalent, luxury clubs thrived, particularly around theaters. Illegal drinking places took a number of forms in the Loop, the most unique being the skyscraper speakeasy. Numerous venues catered to the thousands of out-of-town guests staying in hotels. The “two-bit key club” flourished in offices and sold synthetic scotch and whiskey at marked-up prices to visiting

businessmen. Breweries and stills were virtually absent in the Loop, the only sector where they did not appear.¹³

Drinking businesses extended from the Loop in all directions. As one traveled away from the central business district, retail establishments became even more diverse, in the background of both the owners and the patrons. The Near North Side, the Near West Side, the Near South Side, and West Town were home to a variety of immigrant and working-class residents. Chicagoans often referred to a portion of these areas as “hobohemias” due to the large number of vagrants who haunted them. As the home of numerous ethnic enclaves butting up against each other, these districts were also the heart of the city’s cosmopolitan culture. Boarding houses, rooming houses, and their associated bachelor and bachelorette sub-cultures, prevailed in this general area as well.¹⁴

Directly north of the Loop was the Near North Side. Here newly arrived immigrant groups and black migrants lived in close proximity to native-born residents. While the eastern side of the Near North Side was home to some of the wealthiest Chicagoans, the west side of the community consisted of less privileged

¹³*Chicago Tribune*, 14 October, 29 November 1923, 1 November 1928, 4 December 1966; Glen E. Holt and Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods: The Loop and South Side* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979); Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*, “Loop” entry.

¹⁴Wirth, *Local Community Fact Book*, “Near South Side,” “Near West Side,” “Near North Side,” and “West Town” entries; map by Samuel Thrasher, “Chicago’s Gangland, 1923-1926,” found via <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/maps/chisoc/G4104-C6E625-1926-T5.html>.

residents.¹⁵ The area contained a number of cabarets, gambling houses, houses of prostitution, hotels, and liquor-selling saloons (Figure 13). North Clark Street was a primary locale for drinking establishments on the Near North Side and was often the site of comingling between disparate groups. At the corner of Clark Street and Erie Street was James and William McGovern's Liberty Inn, the center of the underworld in the area.¹⁶ A vast quantity of illegal alcohol production occurred in the Near North Side, particularly on its west side in Little Sicily. According to one source, "To these poor people [illegal alcohol] was their El Dorado . . . they found they could make more money out of cooking alcohol and moonshine than they had ever dreamed of having."¹⁷

The Near North Side was also home to the city's artistic center and "bohemia." Drinking establishments that exhibited a "bohemian" or "hobohemian" atmosphere, such as the Wind Blew Inn, the Suicide Inn, and the Cukoo Club, provided arenas for the development of this culture. It was located near North Clark Street in a socially diverse neighborhood on the Near North Side known as Tower Town. The area was a primary destination for slumming parties seeking out "bohemian thrillage." Washington Square Park, or Bughouse Square, was the cultural center of Tower Town. The area exhibited a "peculiar mixture of vastly

¹⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 16 August 1924; Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*, "Near North Side" entry.

¹⁶*Chicago Daily News*, 23 August, 1920.

¹⁷*Chicago Tribune*, September 9 1928; Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929) provides an early description of how the Near North Side's was divided by class.

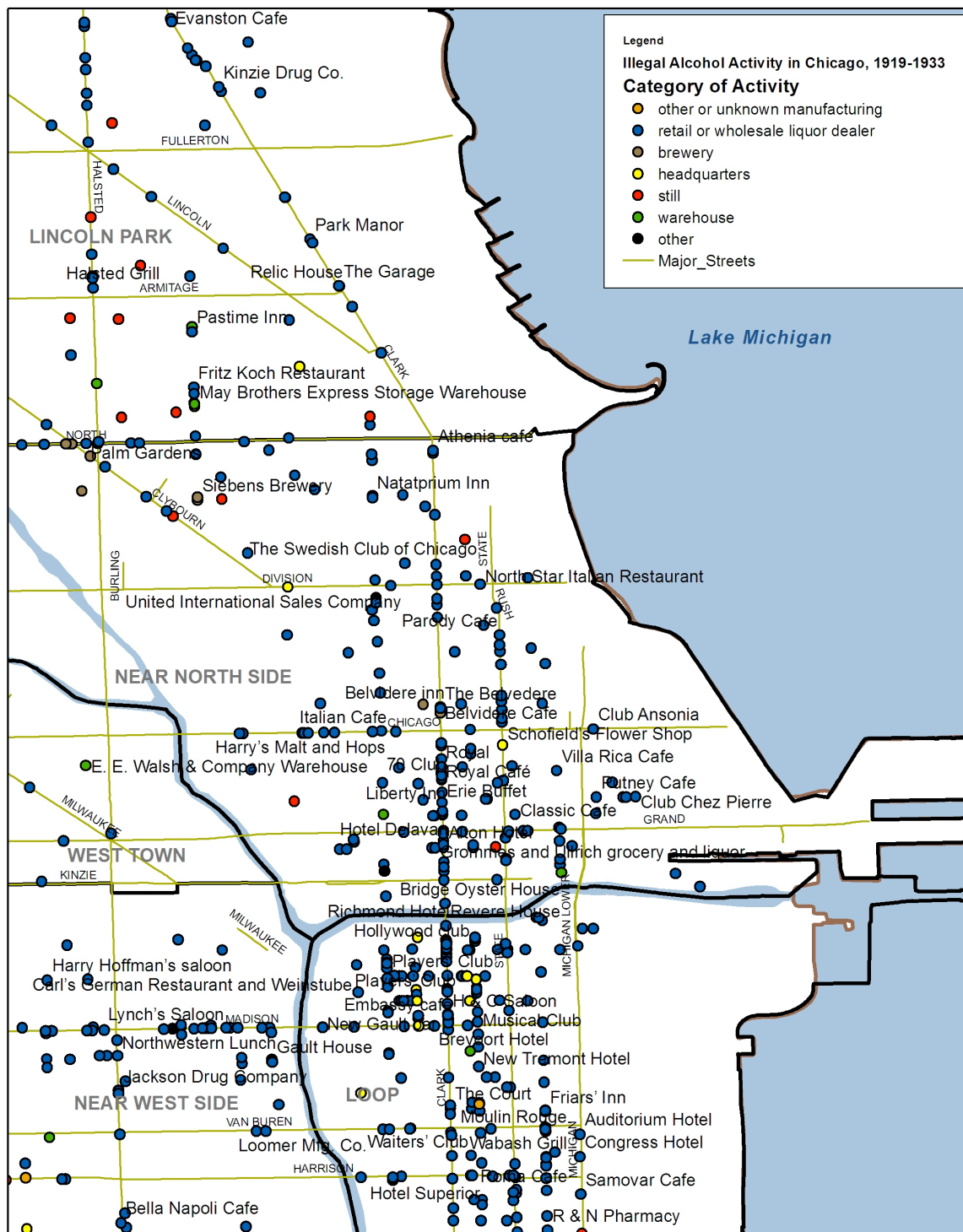


Figure 13. Illegal Alcohol Activity in Near North Side, 1919-1933.

different kinds of people,” according to the *Tribune*. A Mr. Valtair remembered:

“If you were creatively inclined and had no money, you eventually wound up somewhere in the vicinity of Bughouse Square.”¹⁸

Near Bughouse Square was the Dill Pickle Club, a place known to allow liquor in flasks. No place better exemplified the novel ethos of the 1910s and 1920s than the Dill Pickle. Jack A. Jones founded the group around 1916. The Pickle did not gain widespread popularity until the 1920s. The club, which accommodated up to seven hundred people, held frequent activities, such as Saturday night dances and theater productions. The Dill Pickle, which maintained loose ties with underworld figures, colored the surrounding area with its novel ideas, fashions, and behaviors. Situated directly south of the Newberry Library and nearby Washington Square in an alley at 18 Tooker Place, numerous types of Chicagoans had access to it. As visitors approached the club, which had an orange door with a green light above it, they were greeted with a sign reading their motto, "step high, stoop low, and leave your dignity behind."¹⁹ According to the *New York Times*, at the Dill Pickle Club "the elite from the Gold Coast rub [bed] elbows with duffers who have been unemployed so long they can't remember if or when they ever held a job." Q's on North Rush

¹⁸*Chicago Times*, 29 August, 1924, found in Dill Pickle Collection, Newberry Library. Box 1, Folder 28; Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 57-70, Chapter Four.

¹⁹*Chicago Times*, 29 August, 1924, found in Dill Pickle Collection, Newberry Library. Box 1, Folder 28.

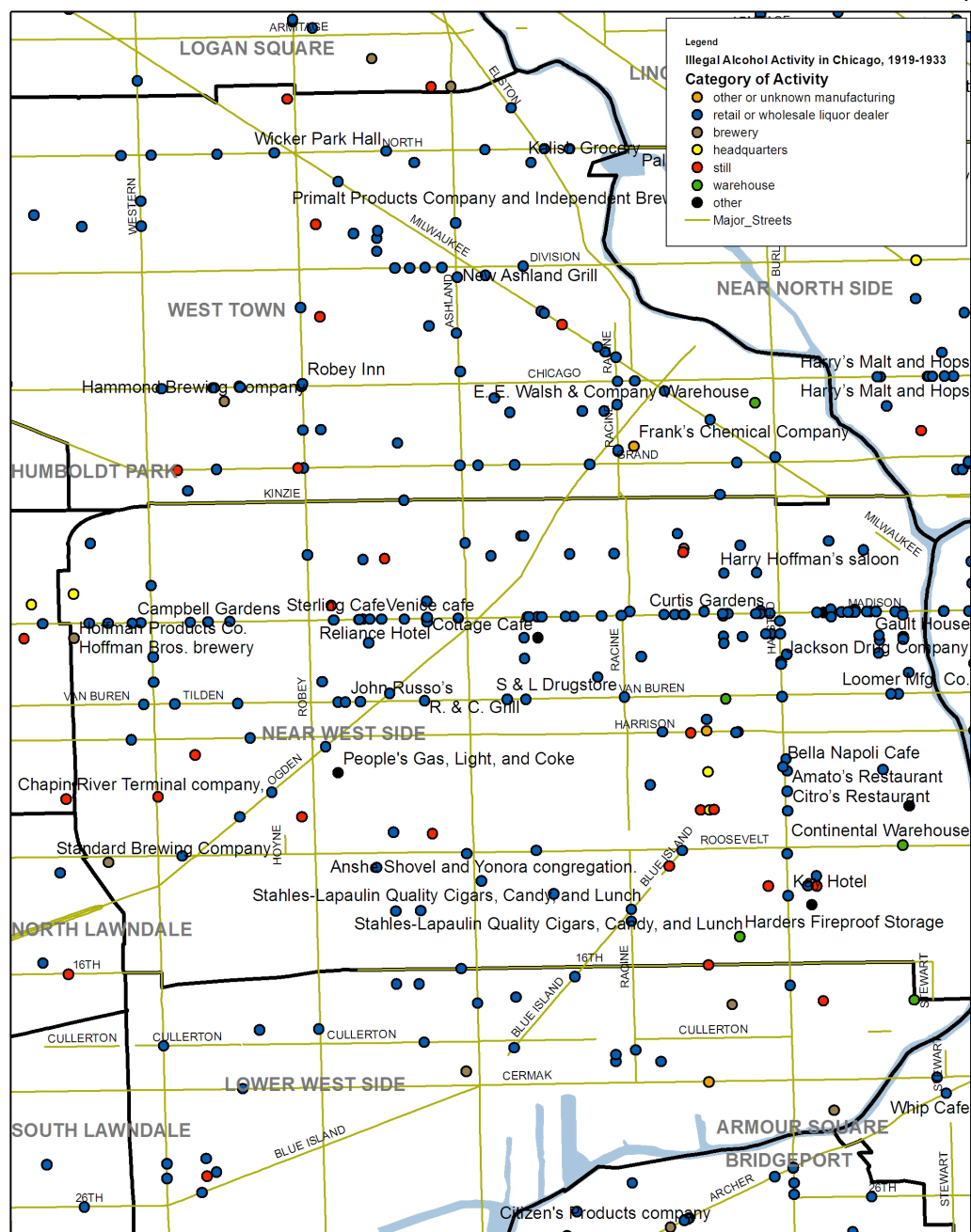


Figure 14. Illegal Alcohol Activity in Near West Side, 1919-1933.



Figure 15. Photo of West Madison Street with Ice Cream Parlor and Madison Café, Which Were Both Cited for Violating the Volstead Act (Chicago History Museum)

Street was another trendy resort that welcomed a variety of patrons.²⁰

West of the Loop was the Near West Side, a longtime center for organized crime and a major point of illegal alcohol manufacturing and distribution (Figure 14). The core artery of the Near West Side was West Madison Street, which contained a number of illegal drinking establishments, gambling dens, and houses of

²⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 12 July, 1931, 30 December, 1972; *Chicago Hush*, 18 September, 1932, found in Dill Pickle Club Papers, Box 4, folder 29, Newberry Library, Chicago; Heap, *Slumming*, 63-65, 182-188.

prostitution (Figure 15). Here consumers cheaply purchased some of the worst concoctions that substituted for alcohol. A variety of different residents lived in the Near West Side, giving the neighborhood a cosmopolitan character despite the ethnic enclaves on many blocks. Italians, Russian Jews, blacks, Greeks, and native-born Americans lived here in close proximity. Located near both the river and railroad yards, the Near West Side, particularly the Valley neighborhood, acted as a receiving depot for illegal alcohol shipments. The Valley was a district of railway yards, hidden alleys, and abandoned buildings lying between Canal Street and Halsted Street and 14th and 15th Streets. While the Valley was largely Jewish in residential make-up, it also served as a mixing point for a number of ethnic groups.²¹ Because alcohol often arrived in the Valley, it was also the site of much violence and numerous hijackings.²²

North of the Near West Side, along the west side of the North Branch of the Chicago River, was the West Town community. Here Poles, Russian Jews, and Italians all maintained a prominent presence. Polish gangs and criminal networks had existed for decades in West Town; however, during the Prohibition era, crime spread. Observers claimed that more than two-thirds of the Polish families who lived in West Town made moonshine in their homes.²³

²¹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 March, 1921.

²²*Chicago Tribune*, 10 March, 1921, 27 August, 1926; *Chicago Daily News*, 17 June, 1920; Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*.

²³Frederic Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1927), 18.

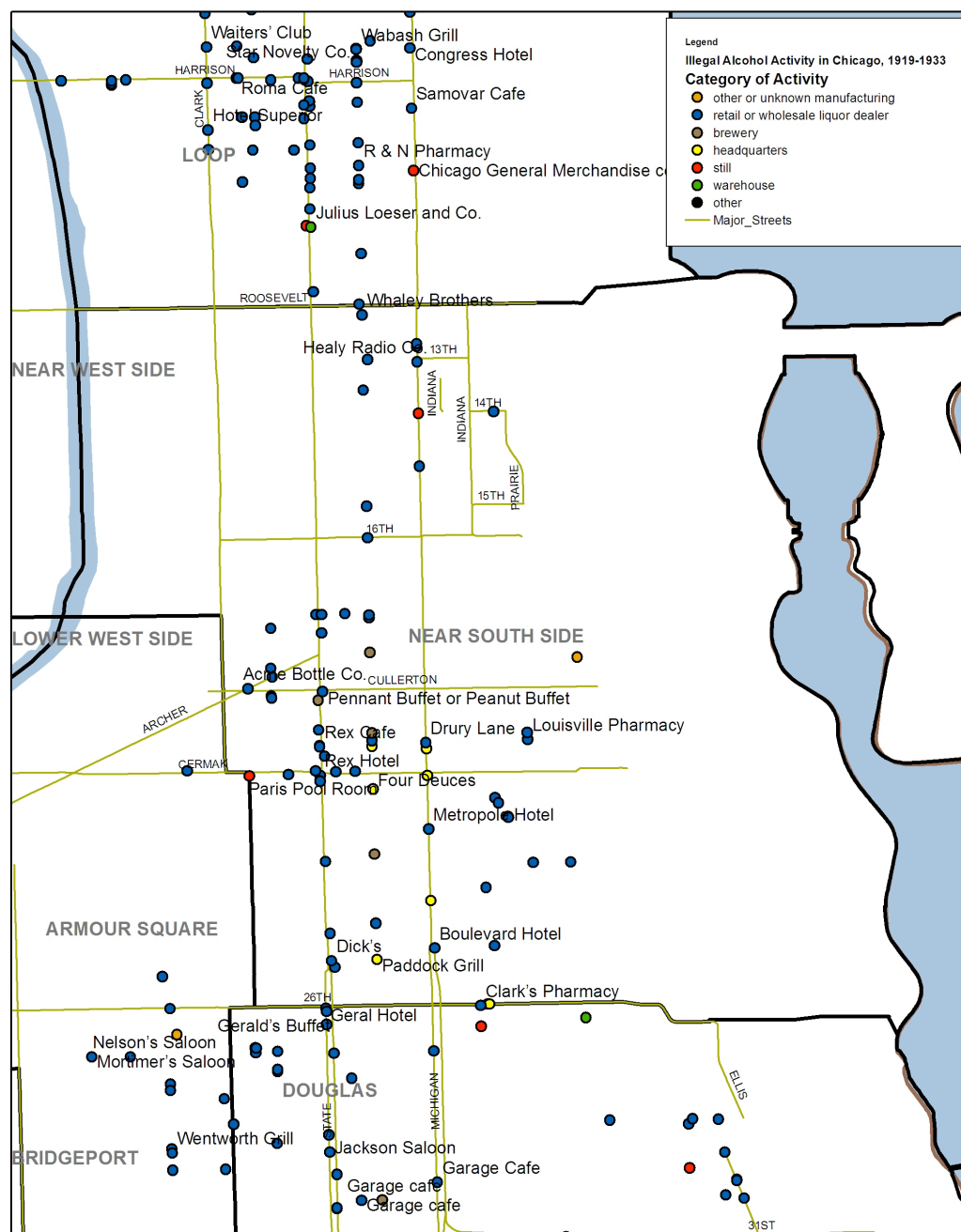


Figure 16. Map of Illegal Activity in Near South Side, 1919-1933.

South of the Loop was the Near South Side, home of the Levee and the center of commercial sex since the 1890s (Figure 16 and 17). Few residences, churches,



Figure 17. Photo of South Federal Street in the Levee District (Chicago History Museum)

and schools existed in the area and it consisted mostly of commercial businesses and industry. However, a number of Italian, Yugoslavian, and black Chicagoans did reside there. In the 1910s, Jim Colosimo gained control of the houses of prostitution in the area and began Colosimo's, an all-night cabaret. The neighborhood continued its importance for the underworld into the 1920s, with the Colosimo's successor, Johnnie Torrio, headquartered there. The Near South Side was also the original destination for black southern migrants. The Levee became a fashionable destination for well-to-do Chicagoans in 1910. During the 1920s, its popularity

continued. Colosimo's, Ike Bloom's Midnight Frolic, and the Rex Café were among the most popular establishments that quenched the thirsts of thrill-seekers.²⁴

South of the city center were a number of communities where crime began to spread in the 1890s and then reached a climax during the Prohibition era, particularly on the southeast side (Figures 18 to 20). This development was partially due to the Thompson Businessmen's Club, an organization for the collection of graft money fronted as a political club, which maintained a ward headquarters at 3328 South State Street. Within this area was the Black Belt, or Bronzeville, including the communities of Douglas, Grand Boulevard, and Washington Park. Restrictive covenants most often forced the increasing number of black migrants to live in the Black Belt. While the area quickly developed into a designated "ghetto," it also provided the opportunity for social mobility for its residents. African American southerners saw the southeast side of Chicago as a land of economic and political hope in contrast to the Jim Crow South. As the site of numerous leisure institutions, Bronzeville became a major destination for Chicagoans across the city in the 1920s. Meanwhile, commercialized sex, gambling, and the activities and milieu of the Levee moved south into the area. As the center of jazz and new dance steps, the Black Belt developed into a wellspring of cultural innovations. More residents sought experiences in the area outside their daily routines. Many revelers looked for thrills they associated with a lower-class

²⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 15 July, 1931; Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 234-240; Walter Noble Burns. *The One-way Ride: the Red Trail of Chicago Gangland from Prohibition to Jake Lingle* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1931), 2-3.

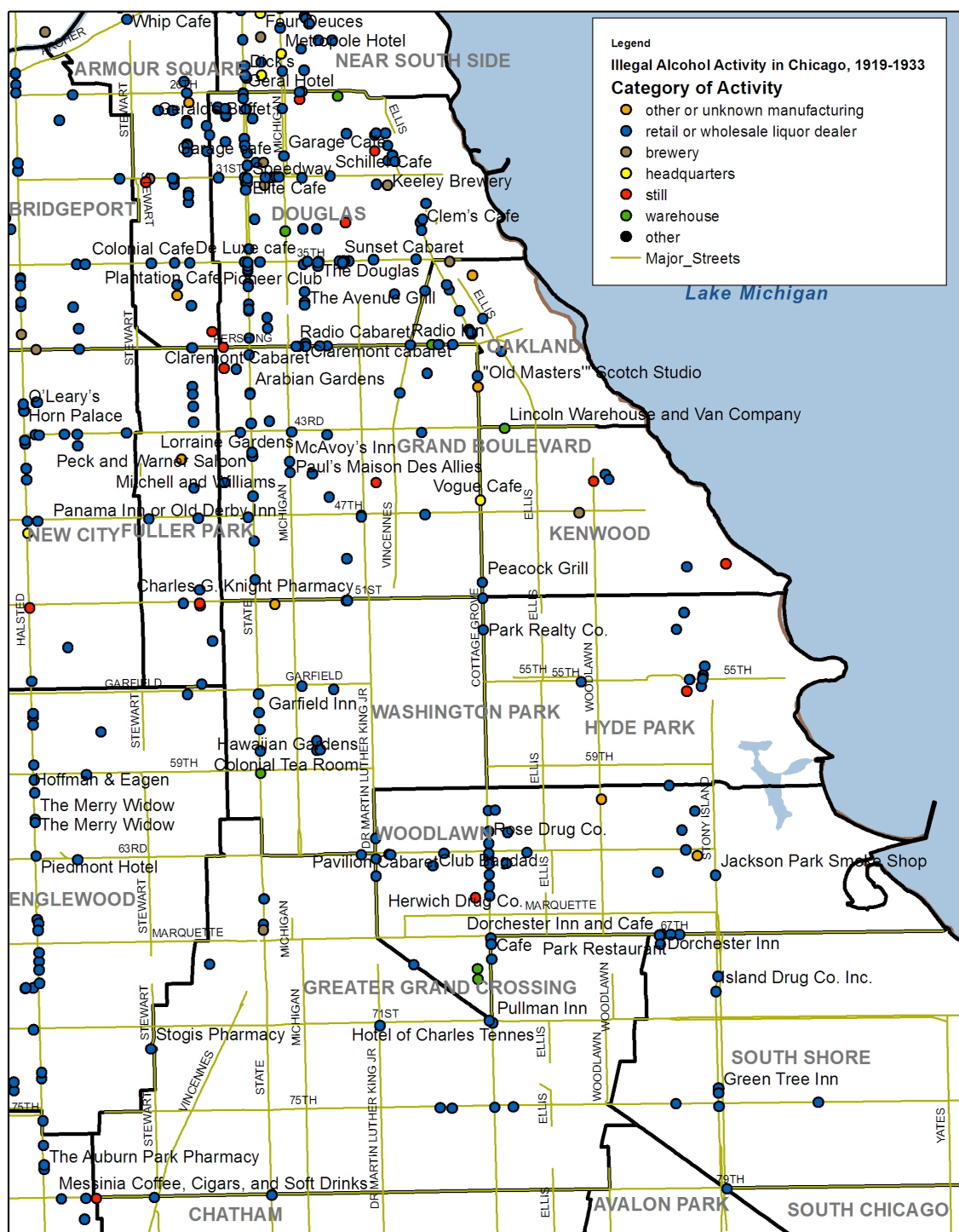


Figure 19. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in Southeast Side of City, 1919-1933.



Figure 20. Photo of Douglas Community at 35th Street and South State Street during July 1919 “Race Riot.” The De Luxe Café and Walgreen Drugs are Shown in Photo, Both of Which Dispersed Illegal Alcohol (Chicago History Museum)

neighborhood. The district became the sight of numerous “slumming parties” of white men and women. As the 1920s progressed, illegal activity spread south into the neighborhoods of Grand Boulevard and Washington Park and into the wealthier lakeshore communities.²⁵

²⁵St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1945); Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*, “Douglas,” “Grand Boulevard,” and “Washington Park” entries; Reports on commercialized prostitution in Chicago, Illinois, 1922-1923, Juvenile Protective Association Papers, folder 93, University of Illinois, Chicago, Special Collections; *Chicago Tribune*, 25 June, 1921; Thomas Lee Philpot, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Immigrants, Blacks, and Reformers in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 33-38; James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); William Howland Kenney, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Chapters One and Two;

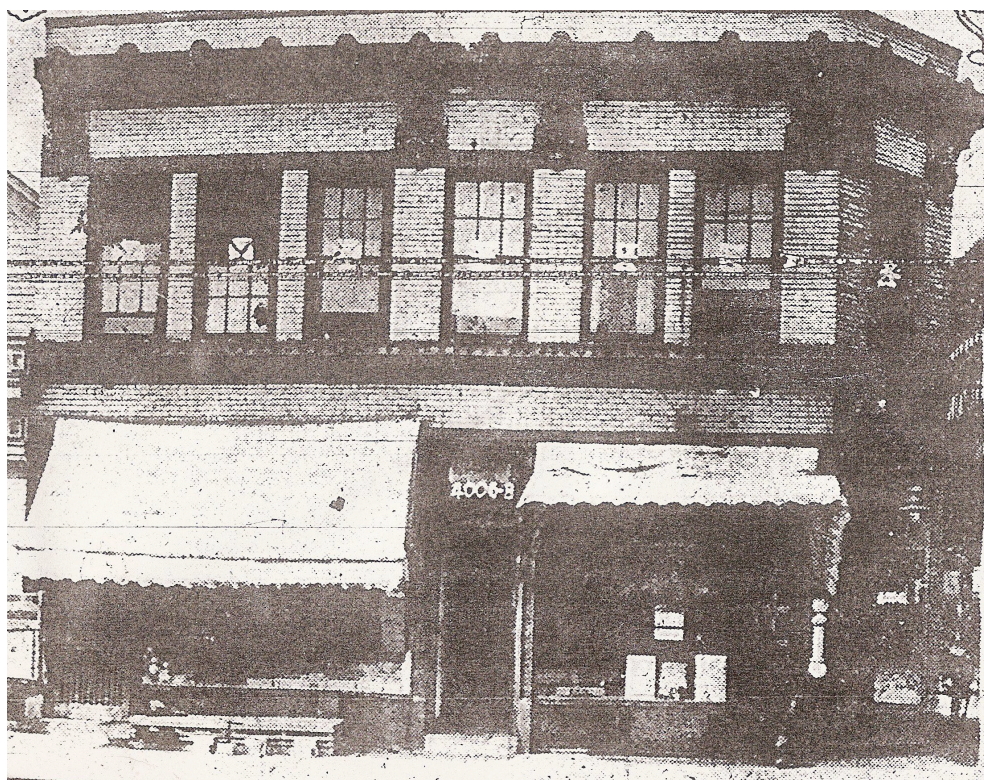


Figure 20. Building at 4006-4008 South Indiana Avenue Near The Stroll in the Douglas community. The Building Housed a Gambling Den, All Night Cabaret, And According to the *Whip*, Was a “Rendezvous of the Underworld” (*Chicago Whip*)

The center of “sporting life”—a contemporary phrase meant to portray those residents involved in not only sports but also in commercial sex, gambling, and drinking—on the southeast side was The Stroll, the area around State Street extending south from Twenty-seventh Street for almost forty blocks. The corner of 35th and State Streets was the primary center of action. The Stroll, often called the “black man’s Broadway,” was the center of business, leisure, socialization, and illegal activities. Nearby, two blocks west of State Street on West 35th Street, was

Dempsey Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Jazz* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishing, 1983), 30-35.

Comiskey Park, where the Chicago White Sox played baseball and where criminal figures were seen watching games. As the 1920s progressed, South Parkway between 47th and 51st streets became the designated “Stroll.” The black-and-tans of Bronzeville were the only commercial entertainment ventures in the city where black and white residents inhabited the same leisure space as patrons. The Ritz-Carlton Café, the Dreamland Café, the Schiller Cabaret, the Paradise Gardens, the Radio Inn, the Sunset Cabaret, and the Lorraine Gardens were among the attended black-and-tans. Other resorts sought to create a more homogenous environs and catered specially to black or white residents.²⁶

Both middle- and working-class residents of all backgrounds ventured to the Black Belt seeking drink, gambling, or sexual gratification. “Raw sex, undisguised” was the impression one *Tribune* reporter came away with from a black and tan in the area. Another described the scene as a “racial rainbow.” While also the site of tension, the district became a major locale for the integration of cultures and ethnic groups during the era.²⁷ Many Chicagoans assumed there to be a proper “color line.” The mixing of black and white patrons struck a nervous chord in many of the city’s reformers. Black-and-tans specifically created the fuel for what many reformers believed to become another violent conflict between the two groups.²⁸

²⁶Kenney, Chapters One and Two; Dempsey, Chapters Five and Six; Ted Vincent provides a depiction of black and tans and the general leisure culture in the Black Belt in “The Community That Gave Jazz to Chicago,” *Black Music Journal*, Volume 12, No. 1 (Spring 1992), 43-55.

²⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 20 September, 1921.

²⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 17 December, 1921.

Gambling was among the main attractions in the Black Belt, as it was one of the more lenient districts for enforcement due to the political influence of criminal networks in the area. Black Chicagoans maintained some degree of control over games such as policy, roulette, faro, and other card games. Many of these gaming establishments were operated by black businessmen and were patronized exclusively by black revelers.²⁹

A number of independent black bootleggers subsisted throughout the Prohibition-era. Numerous families in the Black Belt produced their own moonshine, wine, and beer for their own consumption and to sell to neighbors. Dempsey Travis remembered in his *Autobiography of Black Jazz* the smell of sour mash hanging over some apartment complexes “like a London fog.” However, much of the alcohol served on the southeast side was imported from other areas of the city. In contrast to areas on the North Side, the southeast side, as well as the entire South Side, often served poorer quality moonshine made from corn sugar or poisonous concoctions derived from industrial alcohol.³⁰

Prohibition worked to divide much of the black community on the southeast side of the city. The entertainment and service businesses of The Stroll were a source of pride, cultural freedom, and economic independence for many African Americans. The ability to drink illegal alcohol added to many residents’ experience

²⁹Bachin, 254-264.

³⁰Dempsey Travis, *An Autobiography of Black Jazz* (Chicago: Urban Research Institute, 1983), 54; “Studs Terkel Comments and Presents Prohibition Program,” *Studs Terkel Program*, WMFT Radio (Chicago: WMFT, 5 December, 1983).

of liberty. Many residents fiercely resisted Prohibition as an infringement of this liberty. Enforcement agents often were targets of scorn after they made arrests. Other black Chicagoans living in the Black Belt, however, fully supported the Eighteenth Amendment and resisted the movement of criminal activity and groups of “slumming” whites into their neighborhood. Dry proponents saw the connection between illegal alcohol with the spread of commercial sex, gambling, and other crimes in the area. Church authorities and conservative black newspapers such as the *Broad Ax* resisted the transformation of their community into an amusement playground. While institutions such as the *Defender* and the Urban League supported the development of entertainment in the area, they hoped to curb their association with illicit activities. Despite the efforts of black residents, the Black Belt evolved into the city’s most wide-open district and a primary center of syndicated crime.³¹

Many areas on the southeast side outside the boundaries of the Black Belt that were formerly free of the influence of legal saloons witnessed the rise of illicit drinking places. For instance, in Hyde Park, an area dry even before Prohibition that largely excluded black residents, a cluster of speakeasies developed near the University of Chicago. These places, which were particularly prevalent on the corner of East 55th Street and South Lake Park Avenue, served the number of college students who lived in the vicinity. In this area, conversation was an important aspect to drinking culture. Alcohol encouraged patrons to let go of their

³¹Bachin, *Building the South Side*, Chapter Six; Kenny, *Chicago Jazz*, 26.

apprehensions and discuss issues on their minds. Certain places catered to artistic-minded men and women and intellectuals. Pat White's Front on 55th Street in Hyde Park, next to the University of Chicago, was among the most popular places for discussion. All subjects were fair game and attendees often read popular literature out loud for the pleasure of other guests. Faculty, graduate students, and undergrads all attended.³²

The southwest side of the city was another area where the alcohol underworld proliferated. Communities like Bridgeport and New City in the southwest district were primarily working-class centers of drinking with a variety of immigrant groups living in close proximity (Figure 21). Workers of different ethnicities had mingled for years in nearby Whiskey Row in the Back of the Yards in New City. Prohibition, however, provided new obstacles to multi-ethnic venues in the area. New City, however, became one of the few places where strictly white, working-class Chicagoans met and drank together. While maintaining numerous saloons and speakeasies, few restaurants and cabarets existed on the southwest side and few Chicagoans sought out the area to drink.³³

³²*Chicago Tribune*, 24 February, 1922, 4 December, 1966.

³³Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*, "New City" and "Bridgeport" entries; Holt and Pacyga, *Chicago: A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods: The Loop and South Side*; Robert A. Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Norman Sylvester Hayner, "The Effect of Prohibition in Packingtown" (M. A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1921); Marie Waite, "Prohibition Survey of the Stockyards Community Made by the University of Chicago Settlement," December 1926, Mary McDowell Papers, Folder 7, Chicago History Museum, Chicago; *Chicago Daily News*, 29 May 1920.

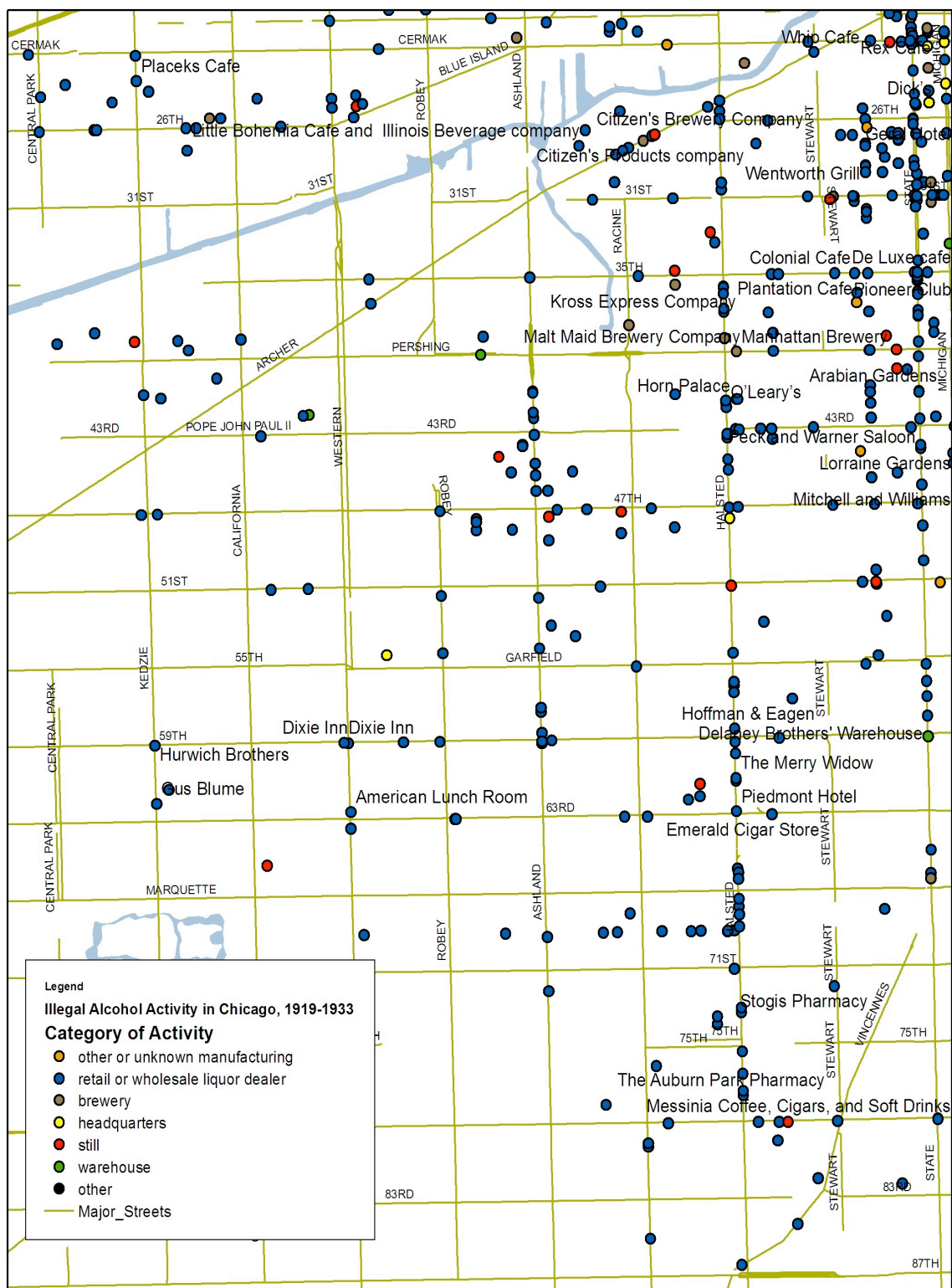


Figure 21. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in Southwest Side, 1919-1933.

Most of the neighborhoods discussed above had elements of the underworld before 1919. However, during the Prohibition era, illegal-drinking establishments developed in areas further away from the city center where organized criminal ventures previously held little sway. As more police stations fell into the hands of graft networks, the illegal alcohol economy extended its reach. Fewer stations maintained “clean” reputations. Expanding from the “river wards,” syndicated crime moved into more residential communities.

The illegal alcohol market gained prominence in a number of the disparate districts on the West Side, many of which were rapidly growing “second settlement” immigrant neighborhoods where criminal leaders previously had little influence (Figures 22 and 23). East and West Garfield Park, North and South Lawndale, Humboldt Park, and Austin, all communities largely free from the influence of alcohol and saloons, all experienced the intrusion of the informal alcohol economy.

The west side communities of North and South Lawndale, areas where organized crime was not prevalent before 1919, witnessed the entrance of large syndicated networks. The Lawndale region, which was more spacious than the city center, was composed primarily of first- and second-generation Americans who worked as industrial laborers in nearby factories, including McCormick Harvester and Sears Roebuck and Company plants. As crime moved into the Lawndale police station, the area became a focus for alcohol distribution on the west side. Russian immigrants, many of Jewish faith, moved west from the Near West Side into the North Lawndale community after the 1910s. Many of these newcomers built networks of alcohol distribution and storage in North Lawndale, dealing largely in

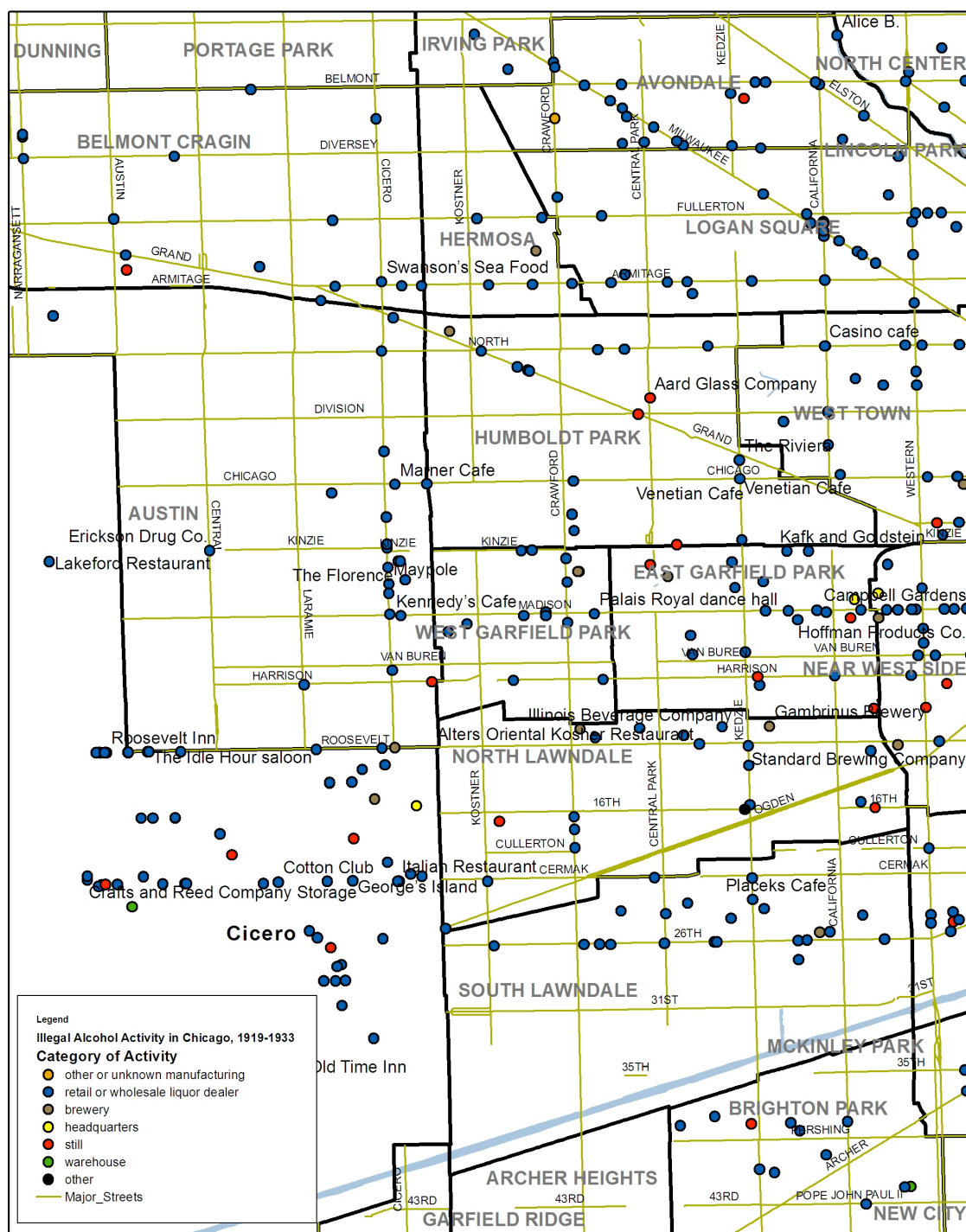


Figure 22. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in the West Side, 1919-1933.



Figure 23. Photo of Austin Community on West Side of Chicago. The Photo Shows Central Avenue Looking South from Lake Street. The Soda Shop on Left Side Was a Retail Liquor Dealer (Chicago History Museum)

wine. Bohemian residents, who moved westward from the Lower West Side, established numerous unadorned, family-operated beer and whiskey flats in South Lawndale. Bohemian immigrant Anton Cermak, elected mayor in 1931, made the area his home. Speakeasy owners in Lawndale set up their operations in secluded sites, often right in their homes. Many of these drinking places here maintained ethnic characters as residents attempted to recreate their tight communities—and more traditional gender values—after moving outside the city center.³⁴

³⁴Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*, “North Lawndale” and “South Lawndale” entries; *Chicago Tribune*, 11 October, 1926; Gus Russo, *How Sidney Korshak and His Criminal Associates Became America’s Hidden Power Brokers* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 5-14.

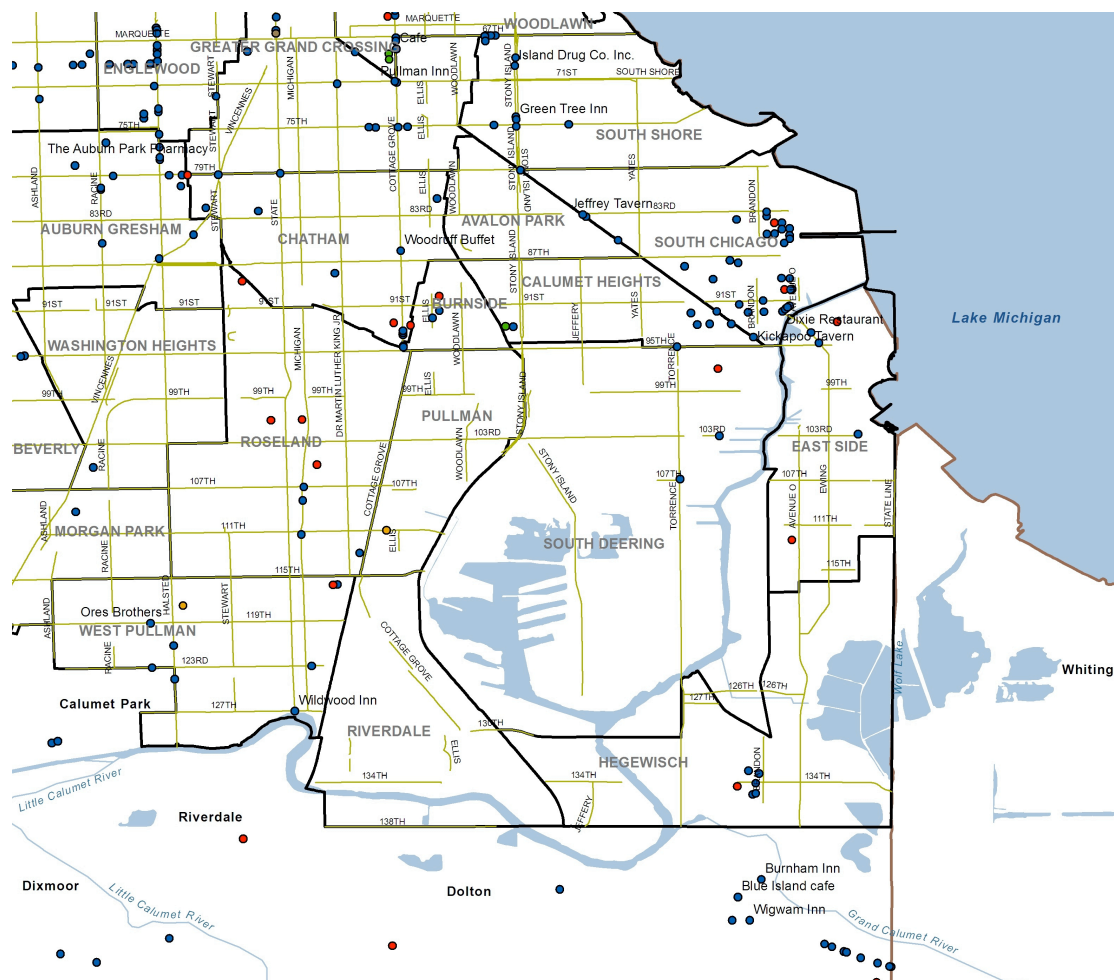


Figure 24. Map of Illegal Alcohol Activity in the Far South Side, 1919-1933.

Miles south of the Black Belt was the Far South Side, composed of the communities such as South Chicago, South Deering, Calumet Heights, East Side, and Hegewisch, where a large number of single-family cottages and bungalows surrounded numerous industrial buildings (Figure 24). The Far South Side was a new area of growth for criminal activity. Built up around the steel mills and other manufacturing industries along the shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Calumet, a number of ethnic, working-class communities developed on the Far South Side. The



Figure 25. Photo of South Chicago Community on the Far South Side. A Number of Retail Liquor Dealers Were Located Near This Intersection (Chicago History Museum)

district became a major area of commercial sex as the crusade against it gained sway in the city center. The community of South Chicago, with its large population of residents of Polish descent, housed the largest concentration of illegal operations on the Far South Side (Figure 25).

Illegal drinking places in these areas usually only served those in their neighborhoods and were not a major destination for residents from other districts. Italian families in the Pullman community operated numerous production and retail facilities in their homes that largely evaded enforcement officials. Selling

homemade wine, moonshine, and grappa to their neighbors provided a steady income. Such operations in Pullman and other Far South Side neighborhoods continued to operate throughout Prohibition without the interference of larger criminal organizations.³⁵

The northwest side of the city, including the communities of Logan Square, Avondale, and Cragin, was another sector into which illegal alcohol spread. Running west from West Town and extending northwest into Logan Square and Avondale was Milwaukee Avenue, which contained hundreds of places to drink. These establishments were more secluded and harder to find than those in areas like the Loop. Polish immigrants and their children operated a large portion of the retail outlets and moonshine stills on the northwest side.

Among the most drastic transformations of the 1920s was the development of leisure districts along the well-to-do north lakeshore, where many of the city's population who had generations of ancestors in the United States resided. Lincoln Park, Lakeview, Uptown, and Rogers Park all witnessed the encroachment of criminal elements (Figure 26).³⁶ The communities of Lakeview and Lincoln Park reflected the spread of crime. Before the Prohibition era, these north lakeshore

³⁵Transcript of Interview with Avigone, Italian-American Collection, Box 5, Folder 43, Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois in Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 21-26; John Ashenhurst and Ruth L. Ashenhurst, *All About Chicago* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), p. 170; Ron Grossman, *Guide to Chicago Neighborhoods* (Piscataway, NJ: New Century Publishers, 1981), p. 153-167; Chicago Plan Commission, *Forty-Four Cities in the City of Chicago* (Chicago: Chicago Plan Commission, 1942), p. 49-50; Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*.

³⁶Louis Wirth, ed., *Local Community Fact Book*, "Rogers Park," "Uptown," "Lincoln Park," and "Lakeview" entries.



Figure 27. Photo of Uptown Community with Church and Illegal Drinking Establishment (Chicago History Museum)

neighborhoods were not particularly known as a destination for carousers from outside the area. Neither did the underworld, saloonkeepers, or corrupt police officials maintain much influence. The Eighteenth Amendment dramatically altered the character of the district. A number of leisure institutions arose in the area, as developers built more boarding houses and apartments. Many alcohol warehouses, speakeasies, and "clearing houses" developed on North Clark Street. The area included a number of illegal drinking establishments in the vicinity surrounding Weeghman Park, later Wrigley Field.³⁷

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 1 January 1920.

The affluent community of Uptown became a center of the underworld on the North Side (Figure 27). Uptown was traditionally an area composed of Protestant residents of German and Swedish heritage. The church was the center of the neighborhood. Numerous surface and elevated train lines extended to Uptown between the 1890s and 1910s. By the early 1920s, the community was a vibrant business and leisure district. While amusements became prevalent in the early twentieth century, criminal overlords remained absent. However, as more residents moved into the area, lawbreaking became endemic. As the demand for illegal alcohol continued, places of amusement expanded in the area. The manager of the famous Edgewater Hotel, William Dewey, and the café manager, Joseph Spagat, became involved in one of the city's largest alcohol syndicates in the early years of Prohibition. The two were part of a group of distributors that illegally obtained whiskey and sold it to former saloonkeepers. Larger criminal organizations soon followed, and by the mid-1920s, the entire region lay under the domain of syndicates and the local police stations became influenced by them. Uptown was often the source of conflict as various organizations quarreled over rights to distribute alcohol in the area.³⁸

Uptown maintained a number of popular places of leisure that sold or allowed illegal alcohol during the Prohibition era. Broadway and Clark Street were

³⁸*Chicago Daily News*, 26 May, 1920; *Chicago Tribune*, 27 May, 1921, 20 September, 1921; Todd Gitlin and Nanci Hollander, *Uptown: Poor Whites in Chicago* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Wirth, *Local Community Fact Book*, "Uptown" entry; Elizabeth Hoffman, "Sacred Spaces: The Intersection of Religion and Space in Three Chicago Communities, 1869-1932, dissertation, Loyola University Chicago, 2010.

the maintain avenues to find the larger open drinking businesses. The Green Mill and the Rainbo Gardens were the most famous resorts. As one ventured down Broadway, one found an array of neon signs emanating from well-known cultural institutions: the Riviera Theater, the Uptown Theater, and the Aragon Ballroom.³⁹ As a center of the growing middle-class, Uptown remained “respectable” to many Chicagoans. Revelers expected a different sort of experience than when they visited places in the Loop or in the Black Belt. The residents of the area liked to think of it as “Smart Uptown Chicago.” Here “eternal youth” was the primary goal, according to the *Tribune*. The area became a destination for white upwardly mobile, young Chicagoans from across the city.⁴⁰

The combination of the automobile, the construction of better roads, and the election of reform mayor William Dever helped to push retail out to roadhouses and countryside resorts (Figure 28). Roadhouses and lakeside speakeasies developed into destinations for Chicagoans from across the city. Suburban and highway dives provided a new sort of cosmopolitan venue for those residents wealthy enough to buy cars.⁴¹ Roadhouses were a new form of drinking establishments during Prohibition. They were not a single entity but instead varied across the region. Many were more “decent,” while others promoted controversial behaviors.⁴²

³⁹“Advertisement for Rainbo Gardens,” Citywide Community Collection. Harold Washington Library; *Chicago Tribune*, 6 February, 1928.

⁴⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 20 September, 1921, 24 February, 1929.

⁴¹*Chicago Tribune*, 18 September, 1923, 16 January, 1932; Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 48, Chapter Eight.

⁴²Papers of the Juvenile Protective Association, Box 7, folder 94.

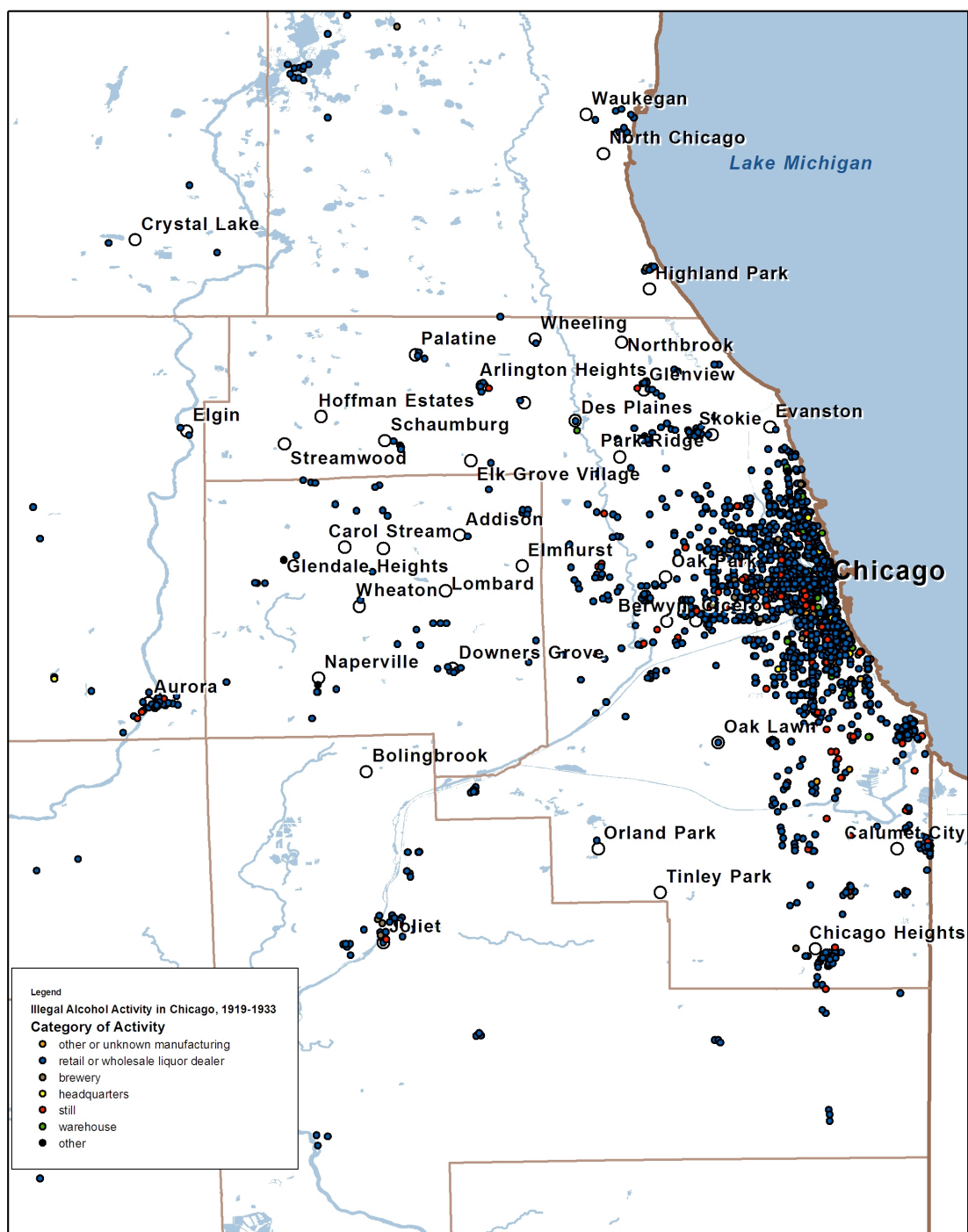


Figure 28. Map of Alcohol Activity in the Chicagoland Region , 1919-1933.

Regardless of their form, they actually allowed for customers to escape the city. Automobiles carried passengers to outlying resorts that appeared to release consumers from the confines of modern life in Chicago. They allowed drinkers to remove themselves from their daily lives and experience the slower rhythms of the countryside. These ventures often led to the forest preserves or to one of the numerous inland lakes. Among the largest areas for illegal drinking during the 1920s was Fox Lake. Chicago businessmen opened a number of saloons, dance halls, and hotels in Fox Lake to meet the rising number of Chicagoans who drove there for leisure. Hotels in the area around the lake maintained casinos with slot machines and card tables. Numerous other illegal drinking establishments arose in hotels and saloons surrounding the “duck lands,” the forest area in Lake County that served as the primary bird-hunting grounds.⁴³

As the black market in alcohol expanded both within and outside Chicago, Prohibition provided an impetus not only for the spread of crime but a source of movement between different areas of the city. Criminal leaders sought to expand their reach and often forced saloonkeepers and other participants in the alcohol business to interact with Chicagoans outside their neighborhood. Networks of manufacturers and bootleggers developed that transcended the boundaries of wards, parishes, or communities. The law also provided venues and networks for residences from across the city, often of different social and ethnic backgrounds, to come into contact with each other either to have a drink or to do illegal business.

⁴³*Chicago Tribune*, 6 November, 1931, 23 July, 1932; 3 September, 1932.

While the creation of citywide criminal networks allowed for some forms of harmonious interactions, it also created the conditions for tensions, as separate factions of the underworld battled for control of neighborhoods in an unending battle for territory to dispense their product.

The Eighteenth Amendment ultimately helped to spread criminal space across the city, making it a major geographical determinant in the lives of residents in Chicago and the metropolitan region. Prohibition turned law-abiding communities into criminal territory almost overnight. With the greatest concentration in the city center, illicit activity expanded outward into outlying towns and suburbs. No longer was unlawful behavior confined to a few neighborhoods. Areas that were previously dry developed numerous retail alcohol establishments. Residents across the city established means to produce, distribute, sell, and consume alcohol despite its illegality. Hence, the moral geography of the city changed rapidly, particularly for those wishing to segregate crime to particular areas such as the Levee. While reformers and prohibitionists sought to expand the role of the church and institutions such as the settlement house in communities and create bastions of virtue from the “sinful” city (which ideally involved the elimination of the saloon), the prevalence of alcohol, and the various sub-cultures surrounding it, grew in the 1920s to influence more areas. This spatial expansion of booze businesses helped to ensure the failure of dry laws.

Each of these illicit businesses was a boon to the fortunes of black market participants. As syndication became more pronounced, neighborhoods became turf over which criminal heads battled. For communities with increasing illegal activity,

like Douglas, Lawndale, and Uptown, the excitement associated with illegal drinking turned into the dreariness connected with underworld control and exploitation. Far outside the city's "ghettos," young men and women came to grow up in areas where criminal leaders held much sway. This prevalence of criminality allowed for organized criminal groups to extend their control over the physical city and gain increasing wealth and power.⁴⁴

⁴⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 20 December, 1933.

CHAPTER THREE

MOONSHINE KINGS, BOOTLEG QUEENS, AND WHISKEY RINGS

Chicago attorney George Remus represented numerous defendants in the city between 1910 and 1919. Following the advent of Prohibition, Remus, who immigrated to the United States from Germany as child in 1878, decided instead to use his knowledge of the judiciary system to make profit. After defending numerous men against Prohibition violations, he chose to disobey the law himself. Obtaining whiskey from the Sibley Warehouse and Storage Company at 187 North Clark Street through forged permits that he signed as a notary public, he bought and distributed over a million dollars worth of alcohol within a few months. With his partner James Provenzano, he transported the whisky to a warehouse at 6542 North Clark Street. Wealthy clients from across the city then purchased the alcohol from the pair.

Remus initially operated without the backing of a larger syndicate or organization. He found the means to obtain the alcohol, moved it, and sold it himself. While Remus maintained connections to a few ward politicians, he never participated in any larger network. His failure to build a more comprehensive organization and to not disburse more graft money to enforcement officials in Chicago eventually proved to be a mistake. After federal agents prosecuted Remus in 1920, he never returned to his illegal endeavors in Chicago. "I'm through with the law here . . . I'm going to Kentucky as soon as my case is cleared up to manufacture

commercial alcohol,” he told the federal court as he faced prison time. Remus instead moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. He continued making millions of dollars from a distillery he purchased in Cincinnati as well as ones in Indiana and Kentucky. While Remus did return to Chicago to do business in the underground economy, he did so only under the direction of an organized system of illicit production and distribution of which he became part.¹

The complex and systematized power structures of the illicit alcohol market that characterized the underground economy later on were far off in the future in 1920. Solo practitioners were common and groups usually involved no more than a dozen or so individuals. This was the age of the “booze barons,” “whiskey rings,” “moonshine kings,” and “moonshine queens.” Although these indistinct names presented an aura of power to these individuals, they actually held relatively little sway within their communities and within the city at-large. While some of these lawbreakers paid protection, they were not involved in any sort of larger, citywide syndicated organization. Smaller coteries evolved into larger ones as more and more men forged relationships with other men from other groups and from other parts of the city. Soon a number of “whisky rings” arose which then eventually developed into a more uniform and encompassing structure. The size of these “booze rings” grew increasing larger between 1919 and 1922. Some of these

¹*Chicago Tribune*, 5 November, 1912, 24 September, 14 May, 1920, 6 February, 1929, 21 January, 1952; Remus built one of the largest distribution networks for whiskey in the country. He eventually wound up in a federal prison and later was found not guilty for reasons of insanity after murdering his wife whom he caught having an affair with the federal prosecutor who sent him to prison; Thomas Coffey, *The Long Thirst: Prohibition in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), 29-32, 101-104, 158-160, 180-183, and 214-218.

organizations functioned with little assistance from neighborhood criminal leaders. Those with close ties to city hall and police precincts attained the most success. The earliest whisky rings or organizations most often served a select clientele of middle- and upper-class residents.

Illicit breweries, stills, and retail drinking establishments immediately became sources for black market profits when wartime Prohibition took effect. This fresh source of capital generated a new “criminal class” in Chicago between 1919 and 1933. Tens of thousands of men and women participated in what was the largest informal economy in the history of the city. The underworld extended its grasp on the city’s economic, cultural, and political environments, as the illegal alcohol market expanded into a common method for Chicagoans of all backgrounds to earn an income.²

While most residents who gained income from illicit booze were males, women participated as well. Females, however, were not as likely to attain prosperity as men and most who did had the assistance of a husband or male partner. Nonetheless, the number of women who partook in manufacturing and selling alcohol grew exceedingly every year and these activities offered them

²*Chicago Tribune*, 3 April 1932; Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, “Prohibition” folder. For histories of the development of Chicago’s world of organized crime during Prohibition and its impact on culture and society during the twentieth century, see Robert J. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992); Kenneth Allsop, *The Bootleggers: The Story of Chicago Prohibition Era* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House); Gus Russo, *The Outfit: The Role of Chicago’s Underworld in the Shaping of Modern America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003); Russo, *Supermob: How Sidney Korshak and His Criminal Associates Became America’s Hidden Power Brokers* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006).

opportunities for profit when few existed for them.³

The pervasiveness of illegal alcohol markets provided a source of new relationships between inhabitants from disparate parts of the city. The exchange of illicit goods became an arena to meet and interact with other residents. These developments led to encounters between disparate groups of Chicagoans. Revelers often crossed the boundaries of their ethnic, racial, and class identities as part of their drinking experience. Additionally, networks of runners, sales agents, and saloon owners often transcended former spatial boundaries of neighborhoods.⁴

A combination of economic, social, and cultural conditions helped to fuel the booze trade. Nonetheless, monetary factors were most critical. Partaking in the alcohol black market was often the only work one could get. According to the German-language *Abendpost*, thousands of men were employed in the illegitimate booze economy not because their own choice but because it was the only work they could get. Other participants, however, sought more than mere sustenance and worked for the attainment of material comforts and the rise of social status. Real possibilities for wealth and a higher standard of living, particularly among those who had little, were all the reasons one needed to break the law. By 1924, so many Chicagoans were involved in the informal economy that many commentators

³Criminal Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Volumes 12, 13, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois.

⁴For contemporary descriptions social fragmentation by ethnicity, see Linquist, "Study of Lithuanians in Chicago, 1922, Burgess Papers, Box 190A; William J. Blackburn, "A Brief Report of a Study Made of the Organization, Program and Services of the University of Chicago Settlement, 1927-28," Mary McDowell Papers, Chicago History Museum, 21.

noticed that the law was partially responsible for increasing the economic fortunes of many families. The manufacturing, transportation, and sale of illegal alcohol provided a newfound, alternative means to obtain money outside conventional, legal methods. The extra income often allowed many laborers and tradesmen to abandon their jobs and sell alcohol illegally full-time. For instance, one Chicago man told researchers for the National Federation of Settlements that a friend of his quit his career as a tailor to retire to his native Italy after accumulating over thirty thousand dollars in two years. Such stories were not unique but were commonplace.⁵

While castigated by reform-minded Chicagoans, this class of criminals also maintained a degree of social capital and respect in their communities. Eliciting a “Robin Hood” image, bootleggers and other lawbreakers did not think of themselves as criminals but instead as people providing a needed service to thirsty revelers. Many of them according to the H. L. Menken, were “moved, at least in part, by a motive that almost amounts to patriotism” and were “trying to rid their country of a shame and disgrace.” Some of these men developed relationships with their workers and maintained an almost paternalistic attitude toward them.⁶

Previous to the “syndication” of the alcohol trade, a number of solo entrepreneurs used the Eighteenth Amendment to gain wealth similar to George

⁵Study of Prohibition for the National Federation of Settlements,” 1926, Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder “Prohibition,” Chicago History Museum, Chicago; *Abendpost*, 18 July, 1931, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 13, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 15 January, 1928.

Remus. Law violators came from all sectors and classes of society. Petty thieves, criminal “bosses,” attorneys, police officers, office holders, and small and large business-owners participated in the acquiring and selling large amounts of alcohol to fill the city’s appetite for intoxication.

A number of sources and methods arose for participants to attain their goods. Importation from the outside was a common method. Chicago bootleggers imported alcohol from a number of locations, both inside and outside the United States. Booze entered the city on trains, automobiles, boats, and planes. The Illinois Central Railroad, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, the Dixie Highway, the Lincoln Highway, Lake Michigan, and, less frequently, the sky served as transportation routes.

Because of Chicago’s lakefront location, it was relatively easy to bring illicit beverages directly in from Canada or other east coast states. C. Morgan, a real estate manager before Prohibition, organized one of the early networks to transport liquor from Canada on boats over the Great Lakes. Based in an office at 17 North La Salle Street in the Loop, the group operated under the guise of the Williams Real Estate Company. They doled out alcohol to both workers in their building and to other offices, restaurants, and hotels downtown. Morgan and his associates built one of the largest bootlegging rings serving the Loop in the early years of the Eighteenth Amendment before federal agents arrested them.⁷

Liquor coming into the country via various “rum rows” off the East Coast and

⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 26 August, 1923.

Gulf of Mexico made its way into Chicago. Men from out of state often developed methods of importing this alcohol into Chicago. Charles Steinberg, an attorney from New York City, purchased an entire fleet of boats to bring liquor to the United States. Among the primary places he distributed his product was Chicago. Transporting it over railroads, Steinberg brought into the city around two train carloads of liquor each week. While he bribed a number of officials within the Prohibition Unit, he was unable to secure complete protection and agents discovered his activities in 1925.⁸

A major source of liquor was the island country of Cuba. Importers often funneled Cuban liquor through New Orleans and then brought it north to Chicago over the railroad. A number of Pullman porters brought whiskey through New Orleans over the Illinois Central Railroad. The operation allowed many of the Black Belt speakeasies, cabarets, and brothels to operate without the interference of non-black gangs until 1923 when the Prohibition agent caught up with their activities. Thomas Madden organized the largest of these networks of porters bringing in rum from Cuba. Madden, the son of Irish immigrants, forged a network of almost forty African American railroad workers, conductors, and porters to smuggle alcohol. They hid the contraband in suitcases and then unloaded it at the depot when they reached the city. Madden and his workers brought in over a hundred cases of whiskey a week over the Illinois Central Railroad line. The group imported over three million dollars worth of alcohol into the city and profited well over a million dollars before federal agents discovered their operations in 1922. The elimination

⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 6 April, 1925.

of this extensive group of importers helped to bring alcohol distribution in the Black Belt within the control of larger, syndicated organizations afterward.⁹

The nascent automobile highway system, particularly the Lincoln and Dixie highways, provided paths for cars and trucks carrying illegal cargo, both in to and out of the city. Alcohol arriving from the South often came in on the Dixie Highway while the Lincoln Highway provided a route of transport from eastern states. Mr. and Mrs. James W. Walsh were among the initial bootleggers to utilize this method. They organized one of the first significant groups to import Canadian alcohol from Detroit into Chicago. James Walsh drove the liquor into the city from Detroit with a truck over the highway. The Walsh's based their operations out of a home at 5406 Ellis Avenue in the Hyde Park community on the southeast side, which they rented from Judge William Gemmill. Isabella Williams, who lived in the Lakeview community on the North Side at 3510 North Pine Grove Avenue, played an important role in the ring. Williams, who the *Tribune* referred to as the "queen of the booze ring," arranged for the delivery of whisky to the homes of wealthy Chicagoans. Over a dozen police officers were involved in the group, who the Walshes paid for protection. The operations served some of the most prominent drinkers in the city. The biggest clients of the Walshes and the Williams were the members of the Chicago Athletic Association, to which they provided alcohol through its manager Martin Delaney. Writer George Ade, author of the 1931 book

⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 19 April, 1923; *Chicago Defender*; Criminal Case Files, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Case Number 9965, National Archives and Records Administration, Great Lakes Region, Chicago Illinois.

Old-Time Saloon: Not Wet, Not Dry, Just History, bought four cases from the group. Before arrests halted their activities, they sold almost a hundred thousand dollars worth of whiskey to prominent Chicagoans. Despite claims of immunity from prosecution from many commentators, such “society bootleggers” as the Walshes were susceptible to arrest and possible conviction.¹⁰

Another method of bringing alcohol into Chicago was flying it directly in from nearby countries such as Canada and Cuba. David Pinkhussohn, an Atlanta-born resident of the affluent Hyde Park neighborhood, was among the most skilled men at this technique. Pinkhussohn flew rum, gin, and whiskey into Chicago from Cuba. He made his plane landings at night in a large open field outside of the city. With his assistant Carl Dillon Carlson, he operated out of the Delaney Brothers Warehouse at 5908 South State Street. Pinkhussohn and Carlson added distilled water and caramel coloring to the alcohol they imported to dramatically augment the volume to sell to customers. They then constructed fraudulent labels to sell their products as Johnny Walker scotch or Gordon Dry Gin. Pinkhussohn eventually came to assist syndicated markets and helped North Side criminal leader Dean O’Bannion import liquor into the city. Federal agents raided the Delaney Warehouse in 1924 and found over a thousand gallons of whisky and another thousand gallons of diluted “colored spirits.” A jury found Pinkhussohn guilty and Judge Adam C. Cliffe punished him with a \$10,000 fine and a two-year sentence in the United States

¹⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 20 July, 1921.

Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas.¹¹

Irving or “Sonny” Schlig was another professional bootlegger who utilized aerial methods of importing alcohol. Schlig worked as a clerk in a factory before Prohibition. Beginning in 1920, he entered the underground alcohol business, selling liquor to druggists and then returning the following day to rob them. His criminal endeavors eventually led him to head one of the largest rings of jewelry thieves in the nation. When O’Bannion entered the booze business in the early 1920s, he also recruited Schlig in addition Pinkhussohn to import liquor for his organization. Two of Schlig’s assistants murdered him and an assistant in 1925 in an attempt to acquire the totality of the loot of one of their heists.¹²

The self-manufacturing of beer, wine, moonshine, and other concoctions was another common method of entering the illegal alcohol trade. In the early years of Prohibition, courts had not yet determined to what extent the manufacturing of alcohol was illegal. Despite a 1921 ruling outlawing all production, many residents assumed they were free to produce beer, liquor, and wine as long as they consumed it themselves. Small-time bootleggers often produced the alcohol themselves. These instances ran in the tens of thousands and were a major component of the illegal alcohol trade. Families profited by selling homemade whiskey and beer to both neighborhood beer flats and syndicate-run establishments. A number of

¹¹Criminal Case Files, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Case Number 12,804, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 29 March, 1924.

¹²*Chicago Tribune*, 29 August, 1925, 23 March, 1926.

Chicagoans produced alcohol in private basements, barns, garages, and attics outside the network of gangs that came to control the illegal alcohol industry.¹³

A major effect of Prohibition was the movement of alcohol production into the home from large factories.¹⁴ A large percentage of the beer, liquor, and wine Chicagoans drank originated in their own homes. Self-production was particularly popular among immigrant groups. Many foreign-born residents and their children made wine, beer, or liquor in their homes before 1919 and continued to do so afterward. In the weeks before wartime Prohibition, supplies to make home distilleries and breweries increased dramatically. Stores began selling apparatuses for the making of liquor, beer, and wine. Most notably, were the copper kettles on sale on the Maxwell Street market on the Near West Side, witnessed years into the 1920s. Not even two months after July 1, 1919, Major Dalrymple estimated that five thousand moonshine stills existed in Chicago. By 1929, enforced officials seized 1,250 stills in that year alone. A government study in 1930 showed that eighty-one percent of all liquor sold in Chicago was what they called “moonshine alcohol and moonshine spirits.” These appellations referred to substances usually made from corn sugar which had various colorings and flavorings added to them, depending upon what drink it was supposed to represent. While many Italian families made wine, Poles and other eastern Europeans preferred to manufacture moonshine. Studies by the Chicago Commons Settlement house claimed that in some

¹³*Chicago Herald Examiner*, 18 January, 1921; *Chicago Defender*, 29 September, 1923.

¹⁴Jane Addams, “A Decade of Prohibition in Chicago,” 8.

neighborhoods one out of every three Polish families produced moonshine and three-fourths of Italian families made wine.¹⁵

The home production of beer, which had thrived for centuries within European families, allowed for more residents to produce beverages for both their families and their neighbors. Home-brewers purchased malt extract from neighborhood department stores and groceries, to which they added water, brewing yeast cake, and sugar to make beer. In order to evade the law, stores sold malt for use as doughnut syrup, standing sugar for sweetening, yeast for making bread, and hops for dressing meat.¹⁶ While the production of beer became more popular, thirsty Chicagoans turned to the home manufacture of wine as well. Among the new career this development created was the traveling wine expert who visited homes to make sure amateur winemakers were producing a substance with alcohol. Due to the relative ease with which resident could create alcohol from grapes (or grape concentrate), the *Tribune* noted that Chicago was fast becoming a city of wine drinkers.¹⁷

Families in many areas of the city manufactured moonshine and beer for their own use and sold excess quantities to neighbors. These men and women distributed alcohol as a way to supplement their meager incomes. Stella Zackowich,

¹⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 21 December 1919, 12 March 1920, 31 December 1921; *Chicago Daily News*, 14 January, 1930; Study of Prohibition for the National Federation of Settlements," 1926, Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder "Prohibition," Chicago History Museum, Chicago.

¹⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 30 July, 4 August, 1931.

¹⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 21, 22 December, 1924, 4 August, 1931.

a Polish immigrant in her 30s, made moonshine and sold it to buyers in her Near West Side community. After police raided her home in 1923, Zackowich told them that she began her illegal activities as a way to earn a living and support her children after her husband died.¹⁸

Other producers were more well-to-do residents. Another minor solo moonshiner was Lincoln Park community resident Dr. August Roah of 2128 North Lincoln Avenue. Roah, a physician, constructed an apparatus that made whiskey with an aging process that lasted only twenty minutes. The whiskey was put into a container, to which he attached electric wires and oxygen tanks. Electric coils aged the whisky, resulting in an excess of fusil oil at the top.¹⁹ Among the most prominent of upper-class alcohol producers and dealers was German immigrant Otto van Bachel. Von Bachel manufactured the alcohol himself in his home on the North Side in the Old Town neighborhood at 1635 North Wells Street. Known as the “gray wolf of Sheridan Road,” he personally distributed whiskey and gin in his vehicle to homes along Lake Shore Drive and north shore suburbs such as Evanston, Highland Park, and Lake Forest. Van Bachel continued to operate until federal agents discovered his activities in 1924.²⁰

Many of these manufacturers transformed their homes into significant distilleries that employed numerous workers. Sylvester Cozzi, an Italian immigrant

¹⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 12 March, 1923.

¹⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 22 November, 1921.

²⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 12 March, 1924.

who worked as a chauffeur before Prohibition, was one of a team of almost a dozen South Side residents who built two hundred-gallon stills to make whiskey in the basement of his home at 1102 South Paulina Street on the South Side. Cozzi and two other partners manufactured the alcohol while around a dozen assistants acted as sales agents. They packaged the whiskey into bottles and put fake labels on them so they appeared as legal bonded alcohol, a common scam of the era. The group, which was composed of men of many nationalities, distributed their product to buyers throughout the South Side.²¹

Residents of all ages produced alcohol. Grace Nuzzo, a fifty year-old grandmother who immigrated to Chicago from Italy, headed another smaller network of manufacturers on the Near West Side of the city. Nuzzo along with her neighbors Peter Tremont and Carmen Russo built four hundred-gallon stills in her home at 928 West Polk Street that made traditional moonshine. The trio distributed the liquor to smaller bootleggers from a nearby cigar store at 934 West Polk Street. As an elderly female, Nuzzo demonstrated the prevalence of participation in the alcohol underworld by residents of a variety of backgrounds.²² Mrs. Fred Witt, however, allegedly set the record for the oldest bootlegger. She was seventy-one years old in 1924.²³

Many entrepreneurs who manufactured their own alcohol built substantial

²¹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 May, 1923.

²²*Chicago Tribune*, 16 August, 1923.

²³*Chicago Tribune*, 9 March, 1924.

networks of distribution. In the early years of Prohibition, one could build a large clientele without the support of a syndicate. When the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect, mechanical engineer and inventor Peter Kettleson devised a plan to use the booze market to earn enough income to invest in future business endeavors. Kettleson, a German immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1911, gathered fellow newcomers to build stills that generated tens of thousands of dollars worth of whiskey every few months. The group distributed the alcohol to saloons in Chicago and Joliet. When Prohibition agents discovered the operation, they had over \$25,000 in whisky ready to sell.²⁴

In the city's Black Belt, Henry Breland became one of the more prominent figures in the underground alcohol economy. Between 1920 and 1923, Breland, who was known to law-abiding residents as an owner of a candy store and tailor shop, became "the king of moonshiners," according to the *Chicago Defender*. He manufactured whiskey from two separate locations on South Cottage Grove Avenue. Customers called in their orders over the phone. Employing a network of drivers, he delivered the alcohol to saloons in the Black Belt. He accumulated over \$15,000 over three years. In late 1923, two of Breland's workers struck him in the head with a hammer in an attempt to recover money they believed he stole from them. Breland died instantly. The elimination of Breland, and similar small-time bootleggers, provided the opportunity for larger forces of syndication to advance in

²⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 17 April, 1920.

the area.²⁵

Many concoctions, produced by both larger manufacturers and by smaller, family based operations, were not pure drinking alcohol. Bathtub gin, made of distilled grain, was among the most popular drinks found in numerous households. Syndicates coerced families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds into making these sorts of concoctions in their homes. Legal industrial or wood alcohol produced in Chicago or elsewhere was another source. Many companies located in the city diverted a portion of their denatured alcohol to sell to suppliers. Hair tonics and shaving locations became a major source of alcohol. Bootleggers built almost two hundred hair tonic factories between 1922 and 1925 in an effort to attain the product. The tonics were then taken to redistilling plants and then mixed with water and other ingredients to give it the look and taste of whisky or rum or gin. The Val Buro Drug Company was amongst the largest distributor of industrial alcohol. Bootleggers either sold these clear liquids as gin or had coloring added to it and sold it as whisky. Contemporary residents often referred to these drinks as colored or uncolored spirits and they were among the most widely available liquors in Chicago. While these beverages provided a “kick” for the drinkers, they often produced “wild” reactions. Usually less prosperous establishments served these dangerous concoctions to patrons.²⁶

Other entrepreneurs utilized the loophole in the Volstead Act for selling wine

²⁵*Chicago Defender*, 15 December, 1923.

²⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 25 January, 1925.

for sacramental purposes to organize distribution networks. Many churches used wine in their religious rituals. While many Protestant churches had switched to grape juice years before, Jewish and Catholic churches won the legal right to use alcohol during services. Irving Freidmann, Harry Ex (an alias), and Frank Loveland operated the largest of these rings in the early months of Prohibition. Their operation included close to a hundred members. The group operated from a downtown office in the Transportation Building on South Dearborn Street directly above the headquarters of the Prohibition Unit, the government agency responsible for enforcement. Friedman and his assistants began their scheme by incorporating a fake congregation or "benevolent society," which allowed for them to buy wine from wholesale sacramental wine dealers. These congregations were not for worship but strictly for the distribution of liquor. Such an operation was not possible without the cooperation of federal officials. Bernard Rumps and Albert Bennett were the primary agents who took protection money in this case and David Wexler was the man who secured protection for all the fake congregations.²⁷

Government officials were deeply involved in the distribution of sacramental wine in Chicago and sometimes operated independently without the assistance of neighborhood criminal leaders. Lowell H. Mason, allegedly a dry state senator from suburban Oak Park, and Major Percy Owen, one-time Prohibition director in Illinois, ran the largest sacramental wine ring in Chicago in the early 1920s. By the time

²⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 3 October, 1924; Daniel Okert, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010), Chapter Twelve.

they were caught by federal officials, they had supplied Chicago with over two million gallons of expensive champagnes, ports, and sherries. The group paid over a million dollars in graft and reaped profits exceeding fifteen millions dollars. While connected to segments of the city's officials, the group operated outside larger syndicates well into the 1920s. Based in a bathhouse at the corner of Broadway and Grace Street in the North Side's Lakeview community, Harry Schlau, a longtime companion of Owen, oversaw the entire operation. With Schlau, Mason, and Owen, wine dealer Louis Abelson expanded the organization by approaching Jewish congregations, many of which were phony and set up merely to obtain a permit to legally acquire and sell alcohol, and demanding they purchase their wine from him. Meanwhile, Abelson collected two hundred dollars a week in graft money from fellow members of his group.²⁸

Legal alcohol, which was bonded by the United States government, made its way to illicit sale. A common source of alcohol was to rely on this permitted supply to sell lawfully or unlawfully. Medicinal whiskey, sold both legally and illegally, composed a significant portion of the alcohol trade. A market in forged prescriptions arose.

In order to supply medicinal liquor, the government created a system of distributing legal alcohol. To possess any amount of this licit product, one had to have it "bonded," which was indicated by a label on the bottle. To purchase it, one needed a permit, what was known as a "stamp." Entrepreneurs devised numerous

²⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 26 October, 1926.

methods to obtain this supply, with either stolen or forged permits. Both real and fake government permits for the release of bonded whiskey were major sources for illegal liquor. In the first year of Prohibition, forms for bonded alcohol were readily available and all one had to do was forge the signature of a federal agent to obtain cases of whiskey. Kentucky was the primary source of this bonded alcohol. Within the first year of Prohibition, a number of "million dollar booze rings" obtained whisky from Kentucky distilleries. During the early 1920s, many bootleggers in Chicago also found their bonded whisky in the in Illinois and Ohio.²⁹

One method of obtaining bonded alcohol was to legally purchase it while in another country and then have it exported to that nation. Once the liquor was in a foreign state, the bootlegger then sent it back into the United States. For instance, Russian-Jewish immigrants Sam Schwartz and Leo Lutz, fruit peddlers, utilized this method. They devised a plan to purchase whiskey from the Lewis Hunter Distillery in Kentucky and then ship it to Cuba. After the whiskey reached Cuba, they then arranged for it to be shipped to South Carolina. From South Carolina, the men brought the liquor into Chicago via railroad camouflaged with lettuce and cosigned as "perishable vegetables. Schwartz and Lutz imported hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of whiskey through this method before federal agents caught them in the act unloading \$75,000 worth of liquor in the Pennsylvania railroad yards at Canal Street and Polk Street in the spring of 1923.³⁰

²⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 30 June, 29 August, 1920, 12 November, 1921.

³⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 6 April, 1923.

A large quantity of alcohol came from the stocks that saloonkeepers, hotel owners, and other businessmen owned previously to Prohibition and had bonded before July 1, 1919. For instance, German immigrants Karl and Emil Eitel held over five thousand cases of whisky. The brothers were the owners and operators of both the Hotel Randolph downtown and the Marigold Garden at the corner of Broadway and Grace streets in the Lakeview community. Their supply was so large it was the target of numerous criminal leaders and retailers. The network of men the Eitel brothers built was citywide and among the largest in 1919. Mere weeks after the beginning of Prohibition, they organized a network of distribution in the city and bought protection from enforcement forces. Saloonkeepers, café owners, and hotel owners engineered a plan to remove the liquor from storage. Criminal leader Michael Heitler, nightclub owner Al Tearney, and Louis and Fred Mann, proprietor of the Rainbo Gardens cabaret, all received cases. They kept the liquor at the Randolph Hotel and moved it to a clearinghouse at 3033 North Clark Street when a buyer made a purchase. A driver then delivered the goods to the purchaser. The brothers made over five hundred thousand dollars in a few weeks. Federal agents came to investigate their business dealings and in August 1920 raided the Randolph Hotel, where Mayor William Thompson himself was having a drink with a few of his political associates. Such schemes became less common as the supply of non-medical bonded whisky decreased after the first few

dry years.³¹

Purchasing bonded alcohol was a common source of liquor for the numerous saloonkeepers and leisure establishment owners wishing to stay in business. The Sherman House Hotel was among the most effective to utilize this method during the first year of Prohibition. The Sherman House was a long-time center for entertainment and dining. The hotel was an early focus for enforcement agents. One raid on the Sherman House in 1920 during a Chicago Press Club meeting left Dr. Ben Reitman with a black eye but no illegal evidence found. Nonetheless, investigators' suspicions about the hotel were legitimate. Beginning the day wartime Prohibition began on July 1, 1919, the Sherman House began purchasing stamps from revenue agents. They sold over a million dollars in wines and whiskey and escaped punishment for years. However, in 1922, federal agents investigated the hotel and discovered their fraudulent exchange of bonded alcohol. Attempting to make an example out of prominent leisure institutions which violated the law, Judge Carpenter fined the company fourteen thousand dollars, the largest fine for such a crime at the time.³²

Harold J. Micheliv, a thirty-something year-old Russian immigrant who lived in the Humboldt Park community on the West Side, was another early example of someone who used bonded alcohol. Micheliv was the owner of the Sunshine Pickle Factory, a company famous for their newly introduced "Moonshine Pickles." Using

³¹*Chicago Tribune*, 5 December, 1919.

³²*Chicago Tribune*, 21 February, 1922.

Harry M. Nadel of 843 Sunnyside Avenue as the front man, he arranged for the sale of bonded alcohol across the city. Micheliv gathered over \$80,000 from saloonkeepers to make purchases from Nadel. His plans, however, backfired when he mysteriously disappeared in the summer of 1920, murdered by an unknown assailant.³³

Within the first year of Prohibition, the first organized groups formed around politicians, saloonkeepers, and other small businessmen. Most of these operations thrived by obtaining bonded liquor. Max Weisbaum headed one network and Philip Grossman fronted another. Grossman, a naturalized immigrant from Russia who came to the United States in 1896, was a saloonkeeper and politician who owned a saloon at 800 West Madison Street. Having connections to other men in the liquor business and politicians, such as Republican County Chairman Homer K. Galpin, Grossman forged relationships in order to manufacture and distribute alcohol. After Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis sentenced Grossman to a year in Bridewell House of Corrections, President Coolidge granted him a presidential pardon. However, federal judges Carpenter and Landis overruled the pardon and Grossman ultimately served his term.³⁴

The largest and most profitable of these organizations often relied on the use of forged and falsified permits to buy and sell whiskey. One of the first groups of men to employ this method on a large scale included John B. Watson, Herman Stein,

³³*Chicago Tribune*, 4 August, 1920.

³⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 17 May, 1924.

William Lawlor, David Blumenfeld, Alexander Greenberg, Charles Appel, and Harry Lang. The men were of middle-class status and most were salesmen. Operating out of an office with a front as a cigar store at 58 West Washington Boulevard near City Hall, the men falsified government permits to obtain alcohol. They imported millions of dollars worth of whiskey from the Early Times Distillery Company in Early Times, Kentucky, a business that held a license to manufacture whiskey for medicinal use. Storing the alcohol at a furniture warehouse on the 6900 block of South Evans Avenue, they arranged for its delivery to saloonkeepers across the city, homes on the city's North Shore, and eventually to liquor dealers in Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Blumenfeld's wife assisted the group by opening a bank account in which they deposited the profits. After federal agents arrested the group in May 1920, they used their connections to continue operating, moving their headquarters to the American Express Building, until officials discovered their activities again the next year.³⁵

Charles Appel, manager of the North Side Turner Hall at 820 North Clark Street, was involved in a number of whisky rings in the early years of Prohibition in addition to the John B. Watson group. Attaining relationships and protection from enforcement officials, Appel developed into a key cog in the booze market in Chicago. Using Captain Dennis Mallory of the Cragin police station as an intermediary in early 1924, Appel attempted to attain ownership of the Hoffmann Brewery Company but was thwarted by criminal leaders Terrance Druggan and

³⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 5 February, 1921.

Frankie Lake on the Near West Side.

Michael Clancy, a second generation Irish-American, was a primary player in the early days of the development of the illegal alcohol economy. Clancy and a handful of men from a variety of national backgrounds headed an early “whisky ring” in Chicago. The group began buying up stocks of alcohol from around the city. Using fake permits to remove bonded alcohol, Clancy purchased over a million dollars in bonded whisky from storage warehouses in the city, particularly from Grommes & Ulrich Fine Foods, a chain a large chain of grocers and liquor dealers. He built ties with politicians, the city police, Prohibition agents, and internal revenue agents, and paid thousands of dollars in protection. The group dispensed the whisky from a number of warehouses located in a variety of neighborhoods around the city. In a single month, the ring brought in profits of over a half million dollars on sales of twenty-seven thousand gallons of whiskey. By the time federal agents arrested him, he sold to saloons across the city and had eventually branched out into Chicago Heights. While he did not face prison or jail time, Clancy, a newcomer to the world of crime, was unable to forge relations with the city’s biggest criminal leaders and public officials and soon gave up on the illegal alcohol trade.³⁶

The Grommes and Ullrich Company became the center of attention again in 1923 when the company devised a plan to distribute its remaining stock of liquor between stockholders of the corporation. After the company disbanded, they disbursed over \$200,000 in alcohol “dividends” to their shareholders. Potter

³⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 30 July, 19, 29 August, 1920.

Palmer and Emanuel Eller were among the recipients of an assortment of bottles of whiskey, gin, brandy, and rum. While the scheme involved many men in high positions, it was not part of the syndicated system of alcohol distribution that was evolving at the same time and did not include any neighborhood criminal leaders.³⁷

One of the largest such rings to utilize forged permits to obtain whiskey was composed of a dozen or so saloonkeepers, politicians, and businessmen on the South Side. Charles Jannett, who owned a roadhouse at 115th Street and South Western Avenue, engineered the scheme and recruited Timothy Quail, an important figure in the Valley gang of the Near West Side area. According to the *Tribune*, the group provided half the booze to the southern half of the city and included some of the “big fellows’ in the mysterious business organization of alcohol.” John J. “Boss” McLaughlin, a West Side politician, provided support to them. McLaughlin, who had served as an assemblyman in the Illinois House of Representatives, worked with William A. Sadler, a New York City stockbroker, to make purchases of large quantities of whiskey and then distributed it to saloon and café owners. The ring included around three-dozen individuals, including Charles Special, mayor of the outlying town of Burnham. A number of Prohibition Unit officials and police officers were also part of the scheme. Jack Costello, an actor from New York City, and James Shea, a private detective from the same city, supplied the stolen and forged permits. They purchased the majority of their whiskey from the Old Grand Dad Distilleries in Louisville, Kentucky. McLaughlin traded whiskey totaled at over ten

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 17 May, 1923

million dollars and extended the network to New York and other states.

Members came in and out of the group between 1919 and 1923; however by 1924, its ability to distribute alcohol weakened due to exposure and prosecution of participants of the ring.³⁸

In the early years of the Eighteenth Amendment, one did not need syndicate backing to make proceeds from counterfeit permits to purchase liquor. Success, however, was usually easier with previous wealth. For instance, Catherine Timponi, wife of Rollo Timpani, manager of the Colonial Theater, and member of one of the most famous theater family in the country, used her husband's money to invest in counterfeit government revenue stamps to purchase whiskey. Timponi, without the knowledge of her husband, built a clientele so large that the *Tribune* referred to her as the "queen of bootleggers." She extended her network outside Illinois into Omaha, Nebraska by making frequent car trips between the two cities. Timponi gained the trust of some of the city's wealthiest residents and used her funds to buy protection. She soon accumulated enough money to purchase a fifteen-room luxurious, colonial-style mansion in Omaha. The local police there described her as "the queen of America's bootleg trust," most likely an exaggeration of her importance. Despite her purchase of immunity, Prohibition agents in Nebraska raided her home and prosecuted her in 1922, sentencing her with a \$100 fine. When her husband Rollo discovered her endeavors, he filed for divorce. Her activities, however, do illustrate the involvement of a wide range of participants in the black market economy,

³⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 17 July, 1923.

particularly in the early 1920s.³⁹

Numerous bootleggers acquired their alcohol simply by stealing it. Hijacking became the newest method of attaining wealth. Owners of whisky and beer had no way to seek redress when captors stole their alcohol, as they could not realistically file complaints with enforcement agencies. Bonded or un-bonded whisky in storage and alcohol that was in the process of being transported in trucks were the greatest targets for hijacking. Often owners of legal alcohol coordinated “thefts” of their own product while it was in storage, retained it, and then sold it illegally. Enforcement agents participated in these activities as well and assisted with the seizures of cargo by pretending to be making arrests and getting truck drivers to pull over on the side of the road. Police officers stole large quantities of alcohol using the threat of arrest and prosecution to compel cooperation.⁴⁰

Many Chicagoans embraced this opportunity to enter the new underground economy. For many it became a standard method to bring income into one’s family. The informal alcohol economy put food in mouths, money in banks, lavish clothes on backs, and luxury goods in homes. The ultimate items within the reach of bootleggers were automobiles and single-family houses. While some men and women only participated to supplement their incomes, others ventured in full scale, most often those participants who already were in the alcohol or crime business. Those men and women who were skillful, and lucky, enough to evade the law

³⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 7 May, 1922.

⁴⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 30 July, 1920, 16 February, 1923.

enjoyed greater wealth. Rags to riches stories abounded. Criminal characters of all sorts arose in most neighborhoods. Found dancing in cabarets, eating in costly restaurants, and mingling with ward politicians, these adult “hoodlums” became a common sight in public places. The Eighteenth Amendment was a lucrative business. Prohibition Director Charles A. Gregory estimated that more than thirty million dollars came into the hands of bootleggers and dispensers of illicit alcohol within Illinois in the first two years alone of the “noble experiment.” Two-thirds of this profit, Gregory believed, was earned completely outside the law with no assistance from medical and religious loopholes or from counterfeiting alcohol permits. By the late 1920s, hundreds of millions—perhaps billions—of dollars flowed within an unregulated, untaxed black market.⁴¹

During the first few years of Prohibition, thousands of men and women entered the illegal alcohol trade. Liquor, beer, or wine was not difficult to produce or obtain, providing residents who might not have been able to or willing to enter the sex and gambling trades opportunities they did not previously have. The illicit market provided an avenue to social and economic mobility for immigrant groups, their children, and for native-born Chicagoans who otherwise had few chances for monetary success due to their lack of education. These fortunes were mostly available to men, despite the number of women who attempted to enter the trade.

⁴¹*Chicago Tribune*, 21 March, 1922; Mark Haller discusses the importance of crime to ethnic groups in “Urban Crime and Criminal Justice: The Chicago Case,” *The Journal of American History*, Volume 57 (December 1970), 619-635 and “Organized Crime in Urban Society: Chicago in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Social History*, Volume 5 (Winter 1971-1972), 210-234. Haller argues that Prohibition provided Italian residents to chance to overtake the Irish as the dominant influence in organized crime in the 1920s.

While some sought great wealth, others used it merely to survive. As array of methods developed for attain alcohol and distributing it to paying customers. The Eighteenth Amendment provided a new means of income for both struggling families and those men and women looking to enhance their personal fortunes.

As the era of Prohibition progressed, smaller operations of all types became harder to sustain. Enforcement agencies eventually fulfilled their promises to prosecute lawbreakers and arrests mounted. Paying protection from enforcement agencies became more common entrepreneurs, big and small. Solo bootleggers gave way to small groups, which in turn gave way to complex, syndicated networks. Disparate coteries of independent gangs became affiliated with a single entity. Neighborhood criminal leaders attained increasing sway within the alcohol underworld as their assistance and connections to politicians became more critical to succeed in the business.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BOOZE-GAMBLING-CRIME OCTOPUS

On a summer night in 1932, Joe “Big Rabbit” Connell, the thirty-five year-old operator of the Island Tavern on Goose Island¹, stepped out for some fresh air, leaving his bartender and check girl to oversee the business. As he stood by the front door, a sedan rolled up to the street curb. One of the three men in the automobile yelled, “Joe, come here a minute.” Connell responded and inched toward the car. The decision to trust the men proved fatal: they fired thirty bullets from automatic shotguns into his body. Connell died before police arrived at the scene.

The reason for Connell’s murder was a common motivation for homicide during the period. The discipline with which the perpetrators conducted it was typical of murders of the era well. In 1931, Connell began manufacturing his own beer. Self-production cost him seven dollars a barrel, which was forty-eight dollars less than the fifty-five dollars the Capone syndicate charged him at the time. After a few months, Connell decided to begin selling his beer to other speakeasy owners for thirty dollars. The competition proved too much for the syndicate; they refused to allow him to continue selling alcohol. After threatening his life, they dealt with Connell much the same way they did with other disobedient proprietors: violence and murder. The events leading to Connell’s death were not atypical for a small-

¹Goose Island is an island in the North Branch of the Chicago River.

time speakeasy owner but part of a methodical and maniacal system in which syndication came to dominate the trade. And like most of the killings within the booze trade his murder went unsolved.²

Just months after successfully prosecuting Al Capone for tax invasion, United States District Attorney George E. Q. Johnson blamed Prohibition for the expanding "crime-booze-gambling octopus" that grew to control a majority of Chicago's neighborhoods, most often by sheer physical aggression. According to Johnson, not only did organized networks of criminals amass sums of wealth in order to "corrupt public officials" but they developed influence over the city's various residential communities as well. Organized groups of wholesale booze dealers accrued political, social, and economic capital and exerted authority over both the underworld and society at large during the 1920s.³

By 1923, independent-minded bootleggers in Chicago, such as George Remus, became increasingly rare, especially within the city center. Within the first two years of Prohibition, as enforcement officials made more arrests and relations between disparate bootlegging groups became closer, syndication became more pronounced within the illegal alcohol business as a method to avoid the hand of the law.⁴ Syndication was the process of systematizing and protecting illegal activity between criminal leaders, political and legal officials, agents of enforcement, and

²*Chicago Tribune*, 11 August, 1932.

³*Chicago Tribune*, 3 April, 1932.

⁴Remus tried to bootleg in Chicago but his solo ventures got him arrested and he was forced to make his profit in other towns and cities, *Chicago Daily News*, 31 July, 1920.

proprietors of manufacturing and retail establishments. Earning a steady income within the business, particularly as a wholesaler, became almost impossible unless one had the support of a larger organization that paid graft to governmental and enforcement officials. Jane Addams detected this transformation. Speaking before Chicago Commons Settlement House workers in the late 1920s, she described the takeover of syndication within the illegal alcohol underworld. While individual and small groups of bootleggers thrived in other cities, she believed, networks of criminals and government officials came to dominate the industry in Chicago. "In no city has the bootlegging industry been so completely organized and so successful apparently in securing protection," Addams declared.⁵

The Eighteenth Amendment helped to corrupt politicians and police and contributed to the criminal tendencies of the entire populace as well. While the Prohibition-era spawned a number of powerful criminal leaders who gained prominence in the city, infamous originators of large-scale organized crime such as Al Capone, Johnny Torrio, Dean O'Banion, and George "Bugs" Moran did not gain their influence alone. They had the help of tens of thousands of Chicagoans who chose to defy the law. Within this network, a few dozen men rose to the top. Influenced by the pre-Prohibition structures already in place, an elaborate hierarchy and chain-of-command system arose. This expansion of the city's criminal class ultimately transformed both the underworld and society during the 1920s. Crime

⁵Study of Prohibition for the National Federation of Settlements," 1926, Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder "Prohibition," Chicago History Museum, Chicago.

became a common activity interwoven with everyday life. Illegitimate sales and distribution of alcohol mixed with legitimate business and politics. Drawing any clear lines between the two worlds became increasingly difficult. The informal alcohol economy extended its influence outside the city's borders into the suburbs, outlying towns, and surrounding states. Attempts to eradicate the black market in the city only helped to spread its influence geographically. These shrewd, determined, and ruthlessly belligerent criminal leaders transformed Chicago into a regional entrepot for illegal booze just as the city had for the trade in grain, livestock, and retail merchandise. "The city holds the key to the rich trade of the West and Northwest in whisky, wine, gin, and beer..." remarked Jane Addams after witnessing a decade of Prohibition.⁶

The structure that upheld the illegal booze market was not a unitary and formal entity but instead a collection of individuals with loose affiliations and agreements conducting similar criminal behaviors. The construction of a stable market of alcohol distribution was made possible through a network of social relationships based within a variety of social groups and clubs. These organizations were strictly male arenas where men exhibited a particular brand of masculinity based on demonstrations of aggression. Nonetheless, climbing the ranks in the underworld often required the cooperation and assistance of wives. Ultimately, the successful use of violence and the ability to corrupt public officials determined who

⁶Jane Addams, "A Decade of Prohibition," *Survey*, 1 October 1929. For an analysis of Chicago's regional importance to industrial capitalism in the United States see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991).

rose to the top of the hierarchy.⁷

The growth of the illegal alcohol economy in Chicago depended upon pre-Prohibition social organizations. Youth street gangs were often the precursor to organized unlawfulness as adults. Beginning as “play groups,” these adolescent gangs developed into athletic clubs, which in turn served as schools for middle-age criminals. Athletic clubs played football, baseball, and other sports and also participated in violently maintaining the color line between the southwest and southeast sides of the city. Ragen’s Colts was the most famous of these organizations. Formed by James and Frank Ragen, the Colts were the predominant Irish athletic club centered in the Packingtown area of the New City community and had a membership of over two thousand young men. The Hamburg Athletic Club, which included mayor Richard J. Daley as its members, was another of these groups. The Hamburg Club was centered in Bridgeport and was composed primarily of the sons of Irish immigrants. These coteries of young men often took part in delinquent activities. While these groups did not often participate in the alcohol trade themselves, they served as training ground for future criminals who did and provided a pool of young risk-takers to transport beer and liquor for syndicates. These athletic clubs also maintained close ties with politicians and police and often served as a gateway to a legitimate career. While initially strictly tied to the Democratic Party of Cook County, they made alliances with Republican politicians

⁷R. T. Naylor provides a theoretical basis to understand how organized crime functions in *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), Introduction and Chapter One.

during the 1920 as well.⁸

These youth gangs and athletic clubs often were precursors to adult fraternal clubs and associations, which helped to building the syndicated alcohol economy. These groups sometimes controlled wards and police stations and hence contributed to the development of organized alcohol selling. The realm of social organizations and fraternal clubs was critical to the development of the underground alcohol economy in Chicago. Many of these groups attained a great deal of influence. While not synonymous with criminal organizations, these alliances served as the basis for larger endeavors. Historians have viewed Unione Siciliana, a fraternal organization strictly of men of Sicilian descent, as the most important of these organizations. Despite the protests of residents of Italian descent and the Unione itself (known as the Italo-American National Union after 1925) by the late 1920s, it had become almost synonymous with organized crime to most Chicagoans. Although it mainly concerned itself with other endeavors such as charity, because its brief leader Tony Lombardo maintained close connections to the underworld, the entire Unione bore this taint. While these clubs were critical to criminal organizations' operation, they were technically separate entities. Criminal

⁸Andrew Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), Chapters One and Two; Mike Royko, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (New York: Plume Publishing, 1988), 37-38; Frederick M. Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), Chapter Two, 17, 23-35, 133, 146, 319. Diamond discusses the importance of these youth athletic clubs to the 1919 race riot in Chicago and considers the idea that they premeditated and coordinated the mass violence against African American residence in the Black Belt.

groups took no name at all but referred to each other by each crew's leader.⁹

The underworld related to commercial sex and gambling in the nineteenth and early twentieth century greatly impacted how the underground alcohol economy expanded. Before Prohibition, the networks that originated within neighborhoods that controlled the gambling and commercial sex trades maintained notions of owning or controlling a particular territory or turf. By 1910, underworld leaders were already fiercely at war with each other. Gang leaders viewed residents and businesspeople living and working in their territory as their subjects. While they helped many men and women to gain profit, they also expected allegiance and loyalty. The most influential criminal coordinators in the years immediately before Prohibition were Jim Colosimo on Near South Side, Michael Heitler on the Near West Side, and the McGovern brothers on the Near North Side.¹⁰

The consolidation of crime related to gambling and commercial sex that developed in the Levee district of Chicago (roughly 22nd and South State Streets) was critical in the formation of the illegal alcohol economy. In the 1910s, Jim Colosimo was the principal owner of prostitution venues in the Levee and was owner of Colosimo's restaurant at 2126 South Wabash Avenue where a variety of residents came together for food, drink, and entertainment. The child of Italian immigrants, he worked his way to prosperity as a newsvendor, bootblack,

⁹Kenneth Allsop, *The Bootleggers: The Story of Chicago's Prohibition Era* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1961), 73, 79-82, 263-270; *Bulletin of the Italo-American National Union*, June 1925, September 1928, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 27, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

¹⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 11 November, 1924.

pickpocket, and street sweeper. He attained prominence by organizing fellow street sweepers into a union before venturing into the commercial sex trade. Colosimo, using his connections to ward politicians such as First Ward aldermen John Coughlin and Michael Kenna, effectively dominated prostitution in the Levee neighborhood. In the 1910s, Colosimo brought Johnny Torrio, a blue-eyed Italian immigrant who established his criminal credentials as a “vice president” of New York City’s Five Points Gang, to Chicago in order to assist him in defending himself against Black Hand threats. Torrio was an expert at eliminating blackmailers in New York and succeeded in a similar task in Chicago. He served as a “front” owner for houses of prostitution in the Levee and was responsible for the movement of commercial sex to places outside of Chicago to suburbs and outlying village in the 1910s. He focused his efforts in Burnham and with Mayor Johnny Patton’s political support, opened a number of resorts. When Colosimo refused to enter the booze racket, Torrio saw to it that he was murdered in his restaurant.¹¹

Dean O’Bannion was another criminal leader influential before Prohibition. Raised in the “Little Hell” neighborhood on the Near North Side, O’Bannion soon played a major role in criminal activity in the neighborhood. He developed his connections at brothers John and William McGovern’s saloon at 661 North Clark Street, known as the Liberty Inn. Foregoing the sex trade, O’Bannion and his confidants relied on cracking safes to accrue illegal profits. He also played a crucial

¹¹*Chicago Tribune*, 24 February, 1929. For history of the Black Hand see Robert M. Lombardo, *The Black Hand: Terror by Letter in Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

role in the development of gambling in the neighborhood. In addition to his criminal activities, O'Bannion acted as a referee for boxing matches, sang, and served as a bouncer at the McGovern brothers' saloon. While Colosimo and Torrio relied on strategic violence, O'Bannion specialized in pure terror, often making displays of power by wandering into commercial venues and opening fire with his revolvers. Chief of Police Morgan Collins once claimed O'Bannion to be responsible for over twenty-five murders. While not a particularly powerful criminal before Prohibition, his influential grew rapidly following 1920.¹²

Previous to Prohibition, Michael Heitler, known as "Mike de Pike," was a key criminal leader in the Near West Side. Heitler, an Austrian-born West Side chieftain of commercial sex, was involved in criminal endeavors since the late 1900s and became an "overlord" of the area for prostitution during the 1910s. He owned numerous resorts on the west side of the city and had even branched out into Gary, Indiana by 1915. He also operated a number of confidence games in saloons throughout the West Side. His illegal ventures provided Heitler with numerous acquaintances on the police force, as graft money kept his establishments running. Heitler's assemblage of personnel from various backgrounds later played a key role in the development of the larger alcohol economy. United by their lower-class background and their sense of violent masculinity, Heitler's crew of men had

¹²*Chicago Tribune*, 3, 10, 24 February, 1929, 25 February, 1951; Michael Lesy, *Murder City: The Bloody History of Chicago in the Twenties* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), Chapter Ten.

worked together to gain profit for over a decade before Prohibition.¹³

Based within these affiliations, criminal leaders gained increasing wealth and notoriety during the years of Prohibition. Unlawful groups turned from robbery to alcohol with the advent of the Eighteenth Amendment. Profits for the most affluent bootleggers skyrocketed from the tens and hundreds of thousands to millions and tens of millions of dollars. Criminal leaders ability sway candidates became greater. Because they provided alcohol, many citizens believed they represented their best interests and shared similar values of personal liberty. More importantly, with their veils of secrecy, vows of silence, and the unabashed use of violence, criminal leaders provided the muscle needed for election victories. Local newspapers charged these men with registering fraudulent voters, ballot theft, kidnapping opposing poll workers, and bombing opponents' homes and headquarters.¹⁴

Through the use of violence, political connections, and sheer will, criminal leaders built a hierarchical underground alcohol market. This chain-of-command system, however, was fluid and leadership positions were constantly in flux. Mid and lower ranking members believed that they could climb the ranks of the hierarchy and become significant leaders. Ability to use violence and intimidation, connections to government, attainment of social capital, and pure luck determined who ultimately came out on top.

While a number of residents often supplied the alcohol, the industry attached

¹³*Chicago Tribune*, 9 September, 1909, 20 April, 1915.

¹⁴*Chicago Daily News*, 5, 13 April 1920.

itself to shrewd businessmen, “trained in an age of complicated commercialism,” as the *Tribune* phrased it, who provided political protection. Neighborhood criminal leaders established a system to distribute and sell the alcohol. At the top of the illegal alcohol hierarchy was this group of criminal leaders who controlled neighborhoods, organized the markets, and sold and distributed the alcohol. While sometimes arrested at some points during their activities, these men were more likely to have their bootlegging careers terminated by murder than by arrest and imprisonment due to the large amount of protection money they dispersed. Within this sphere of influence, a number of men attained even greater authority. This group included infamous men such as Al Capone, Johnny Torrio, Dean O’Banion, Hymie Weiss, and George Moran. Leadership was never certain and roles of authority were largely fluid. As the *Tribune* phrased it, “there was a constant shifting of faces.”¹⁵

While many of these neighborhood leaders battled against each other, they often worked together to pool their power and influence. During the early years of Prohibition, the boundaries between different gangs were unstable and flexible. In the early years, members were constantly negotiating alliances and territory. Few definitive lines existed between the different gangs. All participants needed to cooperate to construct some sort of reliable graft system. Assistants to criminal leaders moved between rivals depending upon which overlord provided more

¹⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 11 November, 1924, 5 October, 1926; Guy L. Nichols, *Prohibition Survey of Illinois: A Survey of Prohibition Enforcement in Illinois, with Special Reference to Chicago, Part II, Chicago District* (Washington D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 289-347.

security and profit. As the underground market developed, leadership centered less on individual men and more on groups of men who functioned similar to corporate boards of directors. By 1923, participating in the illegal alcohol market was more difficult without the influence of these criminal leaders.

While these criminal chieftains came from different backgrounds, most had long-time experience in crime. Many of these leaders attained their start in the underworld in the 1910s, as heads of commercialized sex and gambling rings.¹⁶ This class of lawbreakers often worked together as families to exert their influence. Powerful figures frequently came in pairs or threes, for example Al, Frank, and Ralph Capone; Coleman and Michael Heitler; the Genna brothers; the West Side O'Donnell's; the South Side O'Donnell's; and Terrance and Frank Druggan. Having the family as a base provided the needed trust and loyalty to conduct large-scale criminal operations.

Soon men with experience in the underworld attained dominance of the alcohol market. Michael Heitler was a critical figure in the illegal economy's early months. In 1920 Heitler, returned to Chicago from Cuba. He had moved to the island country after the beginning of wartime Prohibition in the summer of 1919. Rumors of unlimited profits from the sale of illegal alcohol brought him back to Illinois. In the spring and summer of 1920, Heitler recruited hundreds of participants from around the city. Heitler additionally knew many policemen,

¹⁶A number of historians have analyzed this group of men. See Robert J. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992); Kenneth Allsop, *The Bootleggers: The Story of Chicago's Prohibition Era* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1961).

Table 3. Chicago's Most Influential Prohibition-era Criminal Organizations

Leaders	Base Neighborhood	Largest Area of Influence	Periods of Major Influence
Jim Colosimo, Johnny Torrio, Al Capone	Near South, Levee	Most of city	1919-1933
Dean O'Bannion, George Moran, Earl Weiss, McGovern brothers	Near North, North Clark St.	Much of the North Side	1919-1929
Tony, Mike, Angelo, Pete, and Sam Genna	Near West, Little Italy	Influence contained to Near West Side but distributed alcohol throughout city	1920-1927
Joe Aiello	Near North, Little Hell	Contained to Little Hell	mid-1920s
Terrence Druggan, Frankie Lake	Near West, Valley	Much of West Side	1919-1931
Michael Heitler	Near West	Contained to Near West	1919-1921
Spike O'Donnell	Packingtown	Southwest side	1919-1923
Joe Saltis	Packingtown	Areas of southwest side	1919-1930
Ralph Sheldon	Packingtown	Areas of southwest side	1919-1931
Klondike O'Donnell	Near West Side	Much of West Side	1919-1925
Roger Touhy	Desplaines, Illinois	Large portion of northwest side	1919-1933
Martin Guilfoyle	Levee	Section of West Side	1922-1933
Claude Maddox	West Town	West Town	1922-1933

Source: Guy L. Nichols, *Prohibition Survey of Illinois: A Survey of Prohibition Enforcement in Illinois, with Special Reference to Chicago, Part II, Chicago District* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1931; Kenneth Allsop, *The Bootleggers*; *Chicago Tribune*.

having to attain protection for his houses of prostitution. He sold alcohol to men across the city. Using forged permits to withdraw bonded whiskey from the Old

Granddad Distillery in Louisville, Kentucky, Heitler's network brought almost a million dollars of whiskey to Chicago. Due to his connections to police, he retrieved much of this alcohol he sold by having teams of conspiring officers hijack it after purchases. Uniformed officers followed trucks after they picked up their liquor from Heitler. They pretended they were arresting the buyers for carrying alcohol but then hijacked it.¹⁷

While not the only "whiskey ring" in the city in the early months of Prohibition, Heitler's represented the future of the alcohol economy. A variety of Chicagoans appropriated many of his tactics. Organization was among the most important and required a division of labor among members. Further, it was inclusive. Foreshadowing the developments to come, the ring included members of numerous ethnic, class, religious, and neighborhood backgrounds. While living on the West Side, Heitler forged relationships with residents on the North and South Sides. He provided whiskey to Irish-Americans, such as Jim O'Leary in the Back of the Yards and the infamous McGovern Brothers on the Near North Side. Max Wagman, a Jewish immigrant who owned the Curtis Gardens cabaret on West Madison Street and was a major political figure on the Near West Side, was also among his buyers. He also supplied Italian saloonkeepers. While of Jewish heritage, Heitler worked with men of Catholic and Protestant backgrounds. Heitler, however, was not immune. His arrest and conviction was among the most high profile

¹⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 5 March, 1921; "Indictment," Criminal Case Files, USDC, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Illinois, Case Number 7055.

prosecutions in the early 1920s. After a three-year prison term however, Heitler returned to a new world of crime, one in which he had less influence. Retailers were hesitant to do business with him because of his previous dishonest methods.¹⁸

By 1923, Heitler was not a factor in the alcohol economy. No longer did he serve as the head of a syndicate but instead was forced to work as a lieutenant within a larger network of criminal leaders. Other more organized networks lead by more powerful men came to dominate communities.¹⁹

While importing, forgery, and home stills were stable sources of alcohol in the first few months of Prohibition, they were not the sources of the wealthiest bootleggers. Wildcat breweries were the primary means to gaining wealth and power for criminal leaders. Many operated under the pretense that they were producing legal near beer. A number of breweries did in fact manufacture near beer and then later added the alcohol to the barrel or glass with a needle. Most operating breweries, however, made real beer under the protection of enforcement authorities. Breweries were large operations and required a lot of maintenance. Further, the amount of traffic and the constant movement of barrels of beer, which were larger than cases or bottles of liquor, were not easily disguised. Thus attaining

¹⁸Criminal Docket, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Case Number 7321 and 7465, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 10 November, 1920, 18 February, 1951.

¹⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 11 March, 1924; Jane Addams, "Ten Years of Prohibition," 8.

protection was almost mandatory if one wished to enter the brewery business.²⁰

Terrance Druggan was one of the first major criminal leaders of the underground economy to operate former breweries. Based on the Near West Side, Druggan, a son of Irish immigrants, was among the most powerful underworld figures in the city. Born to a family of brewers, when the nation went dry, Druggan took control of the family brewery and used the Valley Gang to distribute the beer. Following the murder of the Valley's Gang's former chief, "Paddy the Bear" Ryan, Druggan eventually controlled the gang. In less than three years, Druggan became known as the "Czar of the Valley Gang." Druggan, along with his assistant Frankie Lake expanded from the Valley to rule a great portion of the entire West Side. As one of the chief distributors of beer in the city, he accumulated over a million dollars profit and owned over two millions dollars in breweries. He continued to make millions throughout the decade. With his fortune, Druggan built a mansion with an accompanying farm outside Chicago in Barrington, Illinois. Druggan's estate became known as a ribald place of gathering where guests drank, socialized, and listened to live bands Druggan hired.²¹

Druggan attained his position largely by forging relationships with other large brewery companies, particularly the Stenson Brothers and the Standard Beverage Company, to distribute beer illegally. Druggan, along with Joseph Stenson, bought many breweries in the Valley neighborhood on the Near West Side. The

²⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 25 March, 1951.

²¹*Chicago Tribune*, 19 June, 1922.

Stenson brothers, whose parents were immigrants from Germany, subsequently were the primary brewery operators who supplied much of the real and needled beer Chicagoans drank during the first half the 1920s. At their peak in the illegal beer business, they held interest in over ten breweries in Chicago, Joliet, and West Hammond. Stenson forged political alliances with many ward leaders, most importantly James Murray, a lieutenant for Nineteenth Ward boss John Powers. By 1924, the *Tribune* referred to Joe Stenson as "the master mind" of the entire underground beer market.²²

Druggan, however, did not evolve into the largest criminal mastermind in Chicago. Instead, the most influential network took root in Jim Colosmio's and Johnny Torrio's old territory. Torrio became the head of vast illegal alcohol empire centered on the southeast side of the city. While sex and gambling made him fairly wealthy, his profits from alcohol made him a multi-millionaire. More than any other man, Torrio was responsible for the attempt at the creation of a singular syndicate in Chicago. According to the *Tribune*, "the systematizing of this underworld rule has been accomplished entirely by Torrio—the Alteries, the Bates, the O'Connors, and the Al Browns²³ all are under him." He gained the support of both Republican and Democratic ward leaders, the mayor, and other political and court officials. Between 1920 and 1924, under his direction, a unified criminal organization

²²*Chicago Tribune*, 3 August, 1924.

²³These men were other high profile criminal leader of the time. Al Brown was one of Al Capone's aliases.

burgeoned across the city. Torrio had over a hundred associates working directly for him. Men such as Al Capone, Michael Heitler, Harry Guzik, and Charlie Carr helped to command these forces. Torrio placed Joe Fusco in charge of overseeing the distribution of beer throughout the city.²⁴

In building a regional wholesale alcohol empire, Torrio took notice of Druggan and Lake's method of gaining control of breweries in Chicago and surrounding towns. He initially purchased a single brewery in order to supply the houses of prostitution that he oversaw. Soon he was providing beer for establishments that he did not own and continuing to buy more breweries. Torrio eventually made a deal with Joe and Frank Stenson similar to Druggan's agreement. By the mid-1920s, the *Daily News* and the *Tribune* both referred to Torrio and Joseph Stenson as the "twin kings of commercialized crime in Cook county." "The brewer is so completely above the law, so thoroughly protected from prosecution, that it is unsafe to mention his name," the *Daily News* claimed. Torrio controlled a number of breweries in the Chicagoland area, including the Sieben Brewery, which he co-owned with a number of criminal leaders and its former owner and brewmaster George Frank.²⁵

Working with a variety of Chicagoans from all neighborhoods and backgrounds, Torrio, known by his criminal associates as "Nice (or Nize) Johnny," expanded from Colosimo's territory in the Levee to build the most influential

²⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 20 November, 1924, 15 June, 1931, 20 July, 1952.

²⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 18 November, 1924, 24 February, 1929, 13 June, 1931.

syndicate in the history of the city. Unlike many other organizations built around ethnic unity, Torrio's alliance did not care for national or religious biases but instead reached out to anyone willing to use the Eighteenth Amendment to profit. Irish, Italian, Polish, Bohemian, and Russian-Jewish groups participated in the building of this citywide syndicate. This multi-cultural organization additionally included members of Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant faiths. Torrio brought cooperation and organization to an underworld in a state of violence, flux, and change. He was also the originator of moving one's criminal operations outside his primary "turf." "I'm sick of the first Ward, he allegedly told a friend. "There's no money in it. I'm going to start operating wherever I get a chance all over the city and in the suburbs, too... A monopoly of all Cook county [sic] is the only way to handle this business so it'll really pay." Even if the reported statement did not actually come from Torrio's mouth, he did in fact succeed in expanding commercial sex, gambling, and liquor-selling establishments throughout the region and increasing the territory of the criminal organization to which he belonged.²⁶

In some respects, Torrio's assembly of works resembled legal businesses. In coordinating a structure of illegal alcohol distribution, Torrio worked to bring durability and stability to the market. The group's original headquarters was at the Four Deuces 2222 South Wabash In 1924, they began to spread out and moved into several locales, including a small building at 2146 South Michigan Avenue, the

²⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 20, 22 May 1924, 24 February, 1929, 9 February, 1926; Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 20.

Lexington Hotel at 2200 South Michigan, the Metropole Hotel at 2300 South Michigan, and the Hawthorne (later the Western) Hotel in Cicero. According to the *Tribune*, “a clerical staff” ran “an auditing system as comprehensive as that of a great business house.” In 1924, after the election of reform mayor William Dever who disrupted systems of graft, Torrio opened a headquarters in Cicero. While maintaining a close coterie of about 50 to 100 workers, Torrio’s network grew to include thousands of manufacturers, runners, agents, and retailers.²⁷

While similar to the entrepreneurs of American industry in his management of a market, Torrio’s enterprise differed in important ways. Unlike many criminal leaders, he refused to use dishonest techniques of profiting, such as hijacking alcohol or stiffing a partner of his share of the profit. He did not use the court of law to settle grievances. Instead he institutionalized violence into business with tactics of intimidation and methodical murders. Resolving disputes and allocating resources, Torrio functioned as a head of state of sorts for numerous satellite entities. Adhering to a strict notion of criminal turf, Torrio ordered the murder of those competitors who attempted to sell in competitors’ territory. Further, if any brewer wished to keep his business open, he was forced to see Torrio about protection. If speakeasy owners in his turf refused to buy from him or an allied manufacturer, Torrio saw to it that he was intimidated. If the resistance continued,

²⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 7 April, 1925, 24 February, 1929; Guy Nicholas, *Prohibition Survey of Illinois*, 314.

the owner often ended up dead.²⁸

While the creation of a citywide criminal network allowed for some forms of harmonious interaction, it also created the conditions for tensions, as separate factions resisted monopoly and battled for control of particular neighborhoods. A number of criminal leaders emulated Torrio's success to gain wealth in their own communities. While many of these neighborhood overlords worked with Torrio, other men eventually decided to contest his authority. As federal agent Brice Armstrong explained, "Druggan and Johnny Torrio were the original Chicago beer runners... with Dean O'Banion, the O'Donnell brothers, and the Millers simply 'boy scouts' in comparison. But, as the hoodlums saw the money roll in... they kept splitting up into new gangs. Each lieutenant would form a gang of his own, competing with the others and hijacking their beer until his own lieutenants formed their gangs and gave him the same medicine." Nonetheless, the Torrio syndicate eventually subsumed many of these separate factions through agreements or use of violence.²⁹

While Bronzeville residents had a degree of control of the leisure district, white controlled syndicates primarily operated and profited from lawbreaking conditions in the area. Soon white outsiders became more influential in the Black Belt, within both the underworld and the entertainment business. Syndicate-run

²⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 7 April, 1925, 24 February, 1929. R. T. Naylor discusses the primary differences between legal and illegal enterprises in *Wages of Crime*, Chapter One.

²⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 17 March, 1924.

establishments like the Plantation Café and the Sunset Cabaret surpassed black-owned cabarets such as the Dreamland Café, Apex Club, and Lorraine Gardens. Further, black Chicagoans were largely excluded from the top of the hierarchy of the illicit alcohol economy. Thus white criminal leaders controlled organized crime in Bronzeville. The Johnny Torrio-Al Capone syndicate distributed much of the alcohol. The area became one of the most profitable territories for the organization. An alleged arrangement between Torrio and Black Belt criminal and political leaders, such as policy “king” Dan Jackson and Alderman Oscar DePriest, to exchange control of gambling businesses for their avoidance of the alcohol market kept violence between the two groups virtually non-existent. Very few black residents died as the result of their involvement in the underground alcohol economy.³⁰

Two separate O'Donnell brothers organizations were major components of syndicated bootlegging, one on the West Side and one on the South Side. The South Side O'Donnell family was among the first group to attempt to maintain independence from Torrio's syndicate. In 1923, they began sending their men out to illegal drinking establishments to get them to switch from buying Torrio beer to making them purchase it from them. Numerous proprietors met their violence, most notably Jake Geis, who owned a neighborhood saloon at 2154 West 54th Street.

³⁰Nathan Thompson, *Kings: The True Story of Chicago's Policy Kings and Numbers Racketeers: An Informal History* (Chicago: The Bronzeville Press, 1994), 26-33. Mark Haller provides an analysis of the importance of policy to the black community in Chicago in “Policy Gambling, Entertainment, and the Emergence of Black Politics: Chicago from 1900 to 1940,” *Journal of Social History*, Volume 24, No. 4 (Summer 1991), 919-939.

The Torrio group retaliated by killing the perpetrators and the early “beer wars”

began. Eventually, the O’Donnell’s relented and ultimately chose to become allies to avoid an ever-escalating arc of violence.³¹

A number of distinct criminal leaders controlled the Packingtown area of the New City community. The Irish of the area district exhibited prominent sway in the alcohol underworld through influential youth clubs and political organizations. The area’s diverse population eventually coalesced under the rule of overlord Joe Saltis, a Polish immigrant.³²

Other pre-Prohibition criminal organizations became incorporated into Torrio’s association as well. The Torrio-Capone alliance, for example, incorporated the Ragen’s Colts into their group by the 1920s as well. Ralph Sheldon, a member of the Colts, headed the network that controlled portions of the South Side for the Capone group. The gang then became a part of the citywide syndicate and its members worked for Capone in their bootlegging activities.³³

Torrio’s most infamous rival was rooted on the Near North Side. Dean O’Bannion and his “North Side gang” initially were part of Torrio’s syndicate but as

³¹*Chicago Tribune*, 9 February, 1936.

³²Holt and Pacyga, *Chicago: A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods: The Loop and South Side*; Robert A. Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago’s Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Norman Sylvester Hayner, “The Effect of Prohibition in Packingtown” (M. A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1921); Marie Waite, “Prohibition Survey of the Stockyards Community Made by the University of Chicago Settlement,” December 1926, Mary McDowell Papers, Folder 7, Chicago History Museum, Chicago; *Chicago Daily News*, 29 May 1920.

³³*Chicago Tribune*, 27 January, 1946.

Torrio increasingly forced them to obey his orders, they fought to attain independence. O'Bannion built his organization, which was larger than Torrio's in the first few years of Prohibition, through the Liberty Inn at 661 North Clark Street where he served as a singing bartender and bouncer in the 1910s and forged criminal alliances in the early 1920s. In the early years of Prohibition, he came to control the pre-1922 Forty-second Ward informing storeowners and residents of his desire to dominate the alcohol trade in the area. While of Irish decent himself, O'Bannion sought out allegiances with members of different ethnic groups, one of few similarities he shared with Torrio. Caring little for honesty and regularization in his business dealings, O'Bannion did not shy away from thievery and double-crossing. He was a daring criminal who contemporary *Tribune* reporter James Doherty described years later as "a big shot hoodlum...with plenty of nerve but... a little short on brains." Appropriating Heitler's techniques initially, he attained his liquor by stealing it in large volumes; however, he later entered into the brewery business. O'Bannion's largest heist involved the Sibley Warehouse, where the government stored confiscated alcohol. The conspiracy included the owner of the warehouse, Sachell Verral. O'Bannion and his assistants then transported the loot to other storage facilities around the city, such as the Delaney Brothers at 5908 South State Street and Harder's Fireproof Storage and Van Company at 3958 Calumet Avenue.³⁴

Cooperation between separate criminal factions, including between

³⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 15, 30 March, 1924, 3 February, 1929, 25 February, 1951.

O'Bannion and Torrio, was the rule until the election of William Dever in 1923, who attempted to enforce the law, making systems of graft more difficult.

Neighborhood criminal leaders, namely O'Bannion, began challenging Torrio for territory. In the early years of the Eighteenth Amendment O'Bannion worked with Torrio. Newspapers referred to the "Torrio-O'Bannion" ring. However, a series of feuds caused O'Bannion to split away from the city's primary syndicate. The two both held shares of ownership in a number of breweries, including the Sieben Brewery and the Malt Maid Brewery.

O'Bannion, a son of Irish ancestors, represented both the cooperation and antagonism between ethnic groups within the underworld. While in the early years of Prohibition O'Bannion worked with Italians such as Torrio, he became increasingly hostile. The year 1924 was critical in the division between O'Bannion and Torrio. Conflict began in the midst of the crackdown during William Dever's term as mayor. Telling an assistant, "To hell with them Sicilians," O'Bannion began his battle against Torrio and his allies. He achieved his revenge against Torrio by framing him for arrest. He set up a meeting with Torrio at the Sieben Brewery, which he knew was being raided at the time. After arrested, Torrio accurately blamed O'Bannion for a set-up. He then decided he would no longer be able to work with or around O'Bannion. In November, as O'Bannion worked on his flowers at his shop on North State Street, two men—who he apparently knew and greeted—shot and killed him.³⁵

³⁵Nichols, *Prohibition Survey*; Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, 51-52, 67, 81-85.

Despite O'Bannion's death, his organization thrived into the 1920s with Earl Weiss, and later George Moran, as head. They made their headquarters at the Club Southern—known as the Wigwam—at the corner of Halstead, Grace, and Broadway Streets (former site of the Marigold Gardens) and continued to battle Torrio. In late the 1920s, the group also set up a headquarters downtown at 127 North Dearborn Street. O'Bannion's successors battled Torrio's organization over turf to distribute alcohol until the end of Prohibition. With "Hymie" (or Earl) Weiss and George "Bugs" Moran as heads, the operation expanded and by 1924, it was chiefly responsible for providing alcohol for numerous locales, including the Fox Lake resorts northwest of the city.³⁶

While Torrio was the key figure in building the city's largest criminal networks, Al Capone, the son of Italian immigrants who was born in Brooklyn, evolved into Chicago's legendary mobster. A number of events frightened Torrio out of being directly in charge of the booze market. In 1925, a federal jury prosecuted him for his involvement in the Sieben Brewery. Further, O'Bannion's successors retaliated against Torrio but failed to kill him. Torrio decided he wanted out and handed control of the organization to Capone, an assistant he hired in the early 1920s at \$25,000 a year to help build his wholesale distribution. Torrio remained instrumental in decision-making. With Capone in charge, syndicate heads reached a new agreement in November 1926 to respect each other's territory.

³⁶*Chicago Daily News*, 11 January, 1930; *Chicago Tribune*, 6 November, 1931, 23 July, 3 September, 1932; Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, Chapter Nine.

Criminal leaders, however, eventually refused to comply with this accord and the battle for turf continued unabated.³⁷

O'Bannion's successors were not the only foes Capone acquired. The Genna family was a major beneficiary of Prohibition and became one of the primary forces behind the illegal alcohol economy. Before 1919, Tony, Angelo, Peter, Vincenzo (or "Jim"), Mike and Sam Genna were unheard of; however by the mid-1920s, they were among the city's most feared criminal leaders. The Genna's built their network in the pre-1922 Nineteenth Ward, maintaining a three-story headquarters at 1022 West Taylor Street in the heart of the Little Italy in the Near West Side community. The Italian American Education Club was the official occupant of the building but it was merely a front. Though their connections to Italian politicians Phil D'Andrea and later Joseph, or "Diamond Joe," Esposito, the family came to manage crime in Little Italy. The Gennas initially obtained their alcohol by fraudulently purchasing government holdings of whiskey and then cutting them at their headquarters. As this source dried up, most of their alcohol came from home production. Through both persuasion and force, they set up small distilleries in the residences of many of the Italian immigrants who lived in the neighborhood. Crime brought millions of dollars to these men and women and politicians like Esposito, who ran for the United States Senate in the late 1920s, attained great prominence.³⁸

Throughout the first five years of Prohibition, the Genna's West Taylor Street

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 24 February, 1929; Nelli, *Italians in Chicago: A Study in Ethnic Mobility, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 215.

³⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 8, 9, 10 October, 1926, 4 December, 1966.

facility reportedly distributed over five hundred gallons of alcohol a day. The site was a constant scene of trucks and automobiles carrying away loads of liquor. Selling each gallon for eight dollars, the family brought in four thousand dollars a day in gross income. As they expanded, the Gennas were incorporated into Torrio's organization, although the two groups had frequent feuds. Homemade concoctions from Genna's and other Near West Side producers supplied many of the larger speakeasies. This synthetic booze also showed up in exclusive bootlegging circles. Using fake labels and flavorings of juniper, walnut hulls, or caramel, sellers presented these mixtures as imported gin, bourbon, scotch, and cognac. Tony Genna became head of the Unione Siciliana in 1925, solidifying the family's prominent place in the underworld. However, their influence deflated quickly. Unknown assailants, most likely Capone men, killed Angelo as he drove in his car in May 1925. Soon after police killed Mike after a car chase. A month later, two gunmen pumped five bullets into Tony as he greeted them on a street corner. Sam, Pete, and Jim fled to Sicily and the Genna's reign came to a halt.³⁹

The Aiello's were another of Capone's chief competitors. The Aiello family attained great influence in the Little Sicily portion of the Near North Side in the later half of the 1920s. The six brothers of Carl, Joseph, Tony, Dominick, Samuel, and Salvatore—who had an additional four siblings—left the food business to enter the alcohol trade at the beginning of the Eighteenth Amendment. Using the support of

³⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 15 June, 1925, 9, 10 October, 1926, 4 December, 1966; Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 128-134.

fellow Italian and Sicilian immigrants in the area, the Aiello brothers developed into a major force within the underground alcohol economy. During the family's conflict with the president of the Unione Sicilina, Tony Lombardo, numerous families left Little Sicily to avoid the violence. The Aiello brothers forged alliances with both the Torrio and O'Bannion organizations to build one of the largest distribution networks in the city. In an attempt to challenge Capone's organization, the Aiello's succeeded in getting Joe Aiello to become the head of the Unione Siciliana; however, his reign did not last long after a Capone hit man murdered him in 1930.⁴⁰

Despite constant clashes with competitors, Capone's organization continued to expand. After the mid 1920s, the group obtained much of their alcohol from importation in addition to large breweries. They received shipments from the various "rum rows" off the coasts of New York, Miami, and New Orleans, in addition to a large amount that originated in Canada. Much of the Canadian whiskey that made its way to Chicago came from Detroit. In the mid-1920s, Capone made a deal with Detroit's "Lefty" Clark, the head of Detroit's Purple Gang, which allowed for the shipment of vast quantities of Old Log Cabin brand Canadian whiskey into Chicago. Boats brought it in from Windsor over the Detroit River or Lake St. Claire, then workers packed it into trucks for distribution. Capone's organization employed a

⁴⁰Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 204-206, 300-301; Guy L. Nichols, *Prohibition Survey of Illinois*.

number of men to transport the whiskey from Detroit over highways.⁴¹

Under Capone's control, the group extended their reach even further outside the metropolitan region. The organization expanded from the Levee to the South Side and southern suburbs. Eventually it came to control areas in all parts of the city. While a number of criminal organizations provided booze to the Loop, the Torrio-Capone syndicate came to control the flow of alcohol in the area through their neighborhood headquarters in the Garrick Theater Building at 64 West Randolph Street. The group possessed territory on the West Side and North Side as well. They attained sources and business connections as far away as New York and Miami. They additionally branched their wholesale business throughout Illinois and beyond to cities and towns as far west as Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska.⁴²

As early as 1919, Torrio sought to expand their rule into outlying areas. Suburban speakeasies, highway roadhouses, and lakeside resorts were all products of the Prohibition era. Johnny Torrio became "Boss of Burnham," running the Burnham Inn and a number of other liquor-selling houses of prostitution and gambling halls. While Burnham's popularity soon waned, towns such as Berwyn, Chicago Heights, and Calumet City all saw the underworld gain influence. Stickney, a town with minimal crime before Prohibition, became "a byword for commercialized vice." Cicero developed into the new center of the Torrio-Capone syndicate.

Syndicated networks followed the general tendency toward decentralization in the

⁴¹*Chicago Tribune*, 23 November, 1921, 22 September, 1929; Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, 132, 136.

⁴²*Chicago Daily News*, 7 January, 1930.

1920s and illegal activity geographically expanded throughout the region.

Organized crime seemed to follow residents from the city to the suburbs as many sought to escape it.⁴³

The influence of Chicago syndicated crime extended well beyond the metropolitan area. Nearby states felt its influence as well. The organizations' reach "embraced approximately one-fourth of the entire country, from New York on the east to Minneapolis and Detroit on the north" from "Omaha on the west and Tulsa and Hot Springs on the south." Some of these alliances were well established. Some were loose and less established. Capone and his assistants helped to spawn a number of affiliated groups in outlying towns and nearby states. One affiliated group manufactured liquor in Aurora and Whiteside County and distributed it throughout Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. Ted Newberry, assistant to Capone during the late 1920s and early 1930s, helped produce the alcohol by operating a massive distillery in Carbon Cliff, Illinois. With the assistance of Mike Blumberg of Clinton, Iowa, the group was able to bring his system of alcohol distribution to Iowa. Brothers Anthony, Paul, and Gabriel Cinquinna collected tribute money for Capone and in return helped to set up networks of protection and find sources of alcohol. A number of politicians, such as state's attorney of Whiteside County Robert W. Besse, provided protection to Blumberg and his associates. When arrested, Blumberg depicted the depth of corruption when he told authorities that "all the roads from

⁴³*Chicago Tribune*, 18 September, 1923, 16 January, 1932, 20 November, 1960; Robert J. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 48, Chapter Eight.

Chicago to Clinton are greased with money for the coppers.”⁴⁴

Syndicated crime affected the political structure of outlying towns and suburbs changed as well. East Chicago was a prime example of how syndicated crime came to dominate the alcohol trade outside the city. Mayor Raleigh P. Hale was a key reason for the infiltration of criminal elements into the city. Through his connections with Phil Collenger, a “lieutenant” of Al Capone, Hale allowed for the proliferation of illegal booze businesses in the city. He was in such a position to make a deal with the Mexican portion of East Chicago, allowing Manuel Mendez to furnish alcohol to them in return for frequent payoffs of around six hundred dollars. Hale sent his nephew John Burhop out to collect the money. This cash eventually ended up in the hands the Capone organization.⁴⁵

Torrio and Capone’s system of wholesale distribution worked like no previous criminal endeavors in Chicago. The scope and power of this organization was so great that it transformed the former Democratic ward bosses, such as “Hinky Dink” Kenna and “Bathhouse” John Coughlin into “captive[s] of the Capone mob.”⁴⁶ Estimates of the syndicate’s income varied and kept increasing as journalists discovered exactly how extensive and lucrative the organization was. In 1929, the *Tribune* reported that profits from booze alone exceeded a million dollars a year and that between 1923 and 1926, the group profited over three million dollars annually

⁴⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 5, 17 July, 14 November, 1931, 28 January, 1932.

⁴⁵*Chicago Daily News*, 9 January, 1930.

⁴⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 20 July, 1952.

for all their endeavors. These figures were based on records government officials seized from one of their business headquarters at 2446 South Michigan Avenue and proved to be extremely low estimates of the amount of profits. In 1931, when federal officials indicted Al Capone and sixty-eight of his assistants, prosecutors claimed the group had accumulated over 200 million dollars in gross income between 1921 and 1931 just on beer, splitting 20 million dollars a year between almost seventy participants. Federal authorities claimed the syndicate made at least another fifty million dollars a year on liquor made from stills they controlled, totaling a seventy million dollar a year gross profit. Other reports put their gross income at 100 to 300 million with the addition of gambling and prostitution profits. Over half of this was from the alcohol trade.⁴⁷

The development of syndicated alcohol markets led to the creation of other jobs and provided steady careers for many Chicagoans. At the top of the hierarchy were about a dozen “board of directors,” as the *Tribune* called them. Unione Siciliana head Tony Lombardo, Tony Volpe, Jake Gusick, Joe Fusco, Lawrence “Dago” Manzano, Charles Fischetti were among Capone’s most trusted allies. Below the “board of directors” was a group of around a hundred or so men who had close contact with leadership and were responsible for the daily operations of commercial sex, gambling, alcohol production and distribution, “labor racketeering,” violence and intimidation, security, and police protection. The syndicate also employed

⁴⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 24 February, 1929, 13 June, 9 September, 1931; Humbert Nelli, *Italians in Chicago*, 219.

hundreds of gunmen, drivers, and other workers to assist in daily activities. The lower two groups did most of the actual work in performing the day-to-day operations of distributing alcohol.⁴⁸

Among the most important element of the criminal aristocracy were those men who provided the intimidation necessary to expand operations. The booze hierarchy was an elaborate operation with violence and deception at its very base. Known as “strong-arm men,” these aides performed a number of functions. Men like Capone and O’Banion often inflicted the physical force themselves; however, these tasks were frequently delegated to a handful of men. Jack McGurn, whose real name was Vinnie DeMora, was the most infamous gunner for the Torrio-Capone organization. DeMora, whose parents immigrated to the United States from Italy, was among Capone’s most trusted assistants. Frank McErlane became the most feared gunner among the Packingtown area organization that Joe Saltis headed. Men whose chief duties included murder and terror also performed other tasks for upper leadership. They were also responsible for intimidating or bribing jury members and witnesses for trials when protection failed to keep members of the syndicate from arrest.⁴⁹

Becoming a high-ranking boss required much physical protection. A number of assistants to criminal heads served as bodyguards. Frank Rio and Philip D’Andrea, for instance, worked as two of Al Capone’s closest bodyguards. Providing

⁴⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 9 February, 1936.

⁴⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 5 October, 1926, 28 October, 1931.

security for criminal leaders was a lucrative profession and often led to high positions within the hierarchy of the illegal alcohol economy. For instance, Torrio was a bodyguard for Colosimo and Capone served as a bodyguard for Torrio. Many observers believed that Rio would inherit Capone's power once he was behind bars.⁵⁰

Criminal leaders likewise utilized trustworthy gun dealers from whom they purchased their weapons. Among the most frequented of them was Peter Von Frantzius. Investigators implicated Von Frantzius in supplying machine guns for both the murder of *Tribune* reporter Jake Lingle and for the St. Valentine's Day massacre.⁵¹

Even transporting of criminal leaders around the city became an elaborate task with many men involved. Chauffeurs were among overlords' most trusted confidants. A crew of drivers, many of whom were black, worked for the Capone syndicate to transport participants to various meetings spots, around the city for nightlife, and to their homes.⁵²

The production of alcohol required a team of overseers. As the syndicate consolidated more breweries, they hired a number of men to help operate them. Bert Delaney, who was born in Canada and immigrated to the United States in the early twentieth century, acted as the Torrio-Capone superintendant of all breweries,

⁵⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 15 June, 1931.

⁵¹Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 225-226, 279, 286.

⁵²*Chicago Tribune*, 30 January, 1932.

visiting each site weekly and making sure that operations were running smoothly. Steve Swoboda, a Chicago-born resident whose parents emigrated from Czechoslovakia, functioned as the official “brewmaster,” developing formulas for different types of beer.⁵³

Once in their hands, syndicate leaders needed to find methods to distribute the alcohol. Sales agents were another critical component of illegal circulation. Often referred to as the “lieutenants” of criminal leaders, these men were important cogs in the system’s machinery, as they were responsible for expanding distribution networks. Agents often overlapped with strong-arm men. They visited illegal drinking establishments to persuade or intimidate owners to sell their alcohol. Hymie Levine was one of the most powerful agents for the Capone syndicate. Levine started working as a salesman for Loop bootlegger Jake Guzik during the early years of Prohibition, when Capone did not work with Guzik. By the late 1920s, he, and his “gorillas,” or strong-arm men, persuaded Loop proprietors of speakeasies to buy their beer and liquor through talk, bombs, and other violence.⁵⁴

Owners of illegal drinking establishments were often targets of intimidation. The life of Jerome Weitzman provides an example of how syndicates tied the hands of retailers. Weitzman, who served as a barber before Prohibition, opened a speakeasy at 229 South Halsted Street in Greektown with the assistance of the Capone syndicate. Disappointed in the rate of his return, Weitzman began buying

⁵³*Chicago Tribune*, 19 June, 1931.

⁵⁴*Chicago Daily News*, 7 January, 1930.

near beer and spiking it with industrial alcohol. Weeks later his former business associates had him murdered. An unknown assailant fired four shots into his body as he worked in his speakeasy.⁵⁵

No participant in the booze market was immune from brutality. Frank Hitchcock was a long time companion of Johnny Torrio and was proprietor of a number of liquor-selling and commercial sex resorts in Burnham, Illinois. After Hitchcock chose to buy alcohol from another buyer in 1928, Capone strongmen shot and killed him.⁵⁶

The transport of alcohol, both from outside the city and within the city, involved numerous workers. Drivers of trucks, referred to as “runners,” received up to a hundred dollars a week. Working with an assistant, they usually drove all day unloading barrels of beer and bottles of liquor to retail establishments. Trucks usually parked in the alley and delivered the product through the rear entrances of retail outlets to remain inconspicuous. The Torrio-Capone syndicate operated the greatest number of delivery vehicles across the city. During their early years, they established a guise for the excessive amount of transportation by forming the World Motor Service Company, a trucking and moving business that Joe Fusco incorporated. Former deputy sheriff of Cook County Nick Juffra acted as “chief of transportation” and provided security for vehicles. Capone was responsible for purchasing automobiles. Literally hundreds of trucks drove the streets daily

⁵⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 26, 27 June, 1932.

⁵⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 28 July, 1927.

delivering replacement barrels, bottles of beer, and assorted liquors. These men often carried weapons because they often had to defend their cargo against hijackers. Finding honest drivers became harder, as many used their position to hijack the alcohol and sell it through their own network. Dry agents were another cause for concern of course. If they discovered evidence in a vehicle, they were likely to confiscate it with no chance of it being returned.⁵⁷

The illegal alcohol market not only required a network to produce, distribute, and sell booze but thousands of men and women who were only peripherally involved. Prohibition created a whole new class of bondsmen to respond to the inevitable arrests. Women often played a key role providing bail, as criminals' wives were some of the only people lawbreakers could trust. Bondsmen developed as a larger enterprise in the 1920s. The development of large systems of bondsmen particularly demonstrated the comingling among different groups, evidenced by the frequency of bondsmen who bailed out defendants from neighborhoods across the city. Jennie K. Butler exemplified how the world of bail bondsmen became more prominent and how women took a significant part in this world. Butler, a migrant from Wisconsin who worked as a spinner for a rug factor, came to the assistance of lawbreakers from a variety of ethnic and class backgrounds. While living in the North Side community of Avondale at 2920 West Belmont Street, she traveled to the Cook County jail located downtown in order to pay bail money for defendants from across the city. Her activities as a bondswoman provided her with wealth and she

⁵⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 14, 21 June, 1931, 19 December, 1932.

was able to own her own building.⁵⁸

By the late 1920s, large national surety companies became more dominant. These businesses maintained branches in many cities and provided bail to arrestees who did not have enough funds. The National Surety Company and the Public Indemnity Company became the largest bondsmen businesses. Both were located downtown at 175 West Jackson Boulevard, just blocks away from the downtown Cook County Jail.⁵⁹

Building a network of alcohol distribution required a talented team of lawyers as well. Payment of protection money did not always provide a guarantee for immunity. A number of attorneys gained popularity defending violators of Prohibition laws. Besides Clarence Darrow, Francis Borrelli was another well-known attorney who took up numerous cases. Italian lawbreakers across the city utilized his services and he used his popularity to become a judge of the municipal court of Chicago by the end of the 1920s. Among the most prominent lawyer who defended violators was former United States Assistant District Attorney Michael L. Igoe. Igoe, who was also a key political figure within the local Democratic Party, represented hundreds of men and women against charges of dry law violations along with his partner Henry Freeman. His wealthiest, and most powerful, client was Johnny Torrio. Igoe used his popularity to gain recognition. In 1935, Illinois

⁵⁸Commissioners Dockets, USDC, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Illinois, Case Numbers 112, 145, 838, 865, 8497, 8954.

⁵⁹Commissioners Dockets, USDC, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Illinois.

voters elected him to the United States House of Representatives, although he soon resigned to become an attorney in the District Court of the Northern District of Illinois in Chicago. In 1939, President Roosevelt appointed him as a judge for that court, a position he held until 1965.⁶⁰

Regardless of what syndicate to which one belonged, none were defined by or comprised of single ethnic, religious, or racial groups. Conspiracy cases in criminal records most often include men and women from distinct and multiethnic backgrounds. For instance, Capone's organization included not only residents of Italian descent but from Irish, German, Czech, and Canadian backgrounds, as well as numerous Chicagoans whose ancestry dated back to the United States many decades. Conspirators came together across disparate upbringings in their attempts to break the law. Almost every social group in Chicago was represented in the upper echelons Torrio and Capone's organization except African Americans. Capone, however, did employ black Chicagoans as bodyguards and drivers. While these interactions often proved harmonious, they also contributed to existing tension. For instance, the Irish-American O'Bannion often distrusted Italians and this was often a source for tension between the two groups. Nonetheless, geography and criminal affiliation often proved more important in establishing one's allegiances than ethnicity or religion.⁶¹

⁶⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 26 June, 1938; Richard Cahan, *A Court That Shaped America: Chicago's Federal District Court from Abe Lincoln to Abbie Hoffman* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 106-107.

⁶¹Criminal Case Files, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Case Number 23,256, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois. A

Prohibition ultimately was responsible for turning the small businesses of illegal tradesmen into larger conglomerates. Men such as Torrio, O'Bannion, and Heitler utilized their pre-Volstead political and police connections to build larger, more complex networks of graft. The growing influence of syndicated crime was most clearly shown in its geographic expansion. Systems of syndication expanded from a few neighborhoods in the city to control numerous wards and police precincts. Criminal organizations that were rooted in single neighborhoods (the Levee, Tower Town, and the Near West Side) in the 1910s spread to influence larger sections of the West, North, and South Sides. While each group attempted to gain command of the entire city, only one succeeded. Although the authority of the Torrio-Capone network was never omnipotent, it was the largest—and only citywide—organization by the end of the 1920s.

The increased capital flowing into criminal organizations directly impacted the social and political milieu of the era. Due to their ability of gangs to direct votes and dispense wealth to government workers, they were increasingly able to influence policy in both Chicago and surrounding towns. In one example of the authority of Torrio's gang, Al Capone personally visited Cicero Mayor Joseph Klenha at City Hall after he failed to obey an order. While a police officer stood and watched, Capone repeatedly kicked Klenha, causing him to fall down a set of stairs. While politicians, such as Mayor William Dever, resisted their influence, they were

list of over seventy members of the Torrio-Capone syndicate is found in *Chicago Tribune* 13 June, 1931. Census data reveals that these men maintained a variety of social backgrounds and were not largely Italian or Jewish or Irish.

ultimately unable to eliminate it. Alcohol syndicates' political connections, ability to elicit terror, and distribution of well-paying jobs were too much for Dever and his allies. The power of Torrio and his cohorts only continued to expand in the mid-1920s.⁶²

The method of organization in Chicago was so profitable it became a model for other locales. While no small town or city reached the level of coordination of Chicago's underworld, networks of alcohol distribution arose across the country. Newspapers began referring to the "Capone of Clinton, Iowa" or "the Capone of Kansas City." Nonetheless Chicago was above the rest in the level of sophistication of its underground economy.⁶³

The systemization of the alcohol economy, while causing instability with its violence and constant replacement of chieftains, provided a sense of permanence and structure to the trade. With the development of organized networks, illegal careers became more available to ordinary Chicagoans. The informal alcohol market competed with legitimate sources of income. "Big shot" organization heads who reaped profits in the millions, however, were not the only beneficiaries of syndicated alcohol activity. Thousands of other participants, such as drivers, retailers, and still and brewery workers, were willing to temporarily forget the ruthlessness of criminal leaders because they also provided a form of economic mobility previously not as accessible.

⁶²Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, 64.

⁶³*Chicago Tribune*, 17 July, 1931, 30 September, 1932.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEMORALIZATION IS FROM THE TOP

In the midst of the election season of 1924, local Democrats in Chicago held a banquet for a special guest of honor. Held in a private room at the luxurious Webster Hotel in the Lincoln Park community, the dinner course consisted of the finest foods prepared during the 1920s. Among the guests were Chief of Detectives Michael Hughes, who later became chief of police in 1927; Police Lieutenant Charles Egan; William Scott Stewart, a former assistant state's attorney; Colonel A. Sprague, commissioner of public works in the Dever administration; and county clerk Robert M. Sweitzer, who lost to Bill Thompson in the mayoral election of 1915. The focus of adulation that night was North Side criminal leader Dean O'Bannion. O'Bannion controlled many votes by merely suggesting to community members his preferred candidate. While a longtime Democrat, the Republicans wanted his support. Democrats were trying to keep his backing but their wooing did not persuade O'Bannion. Like many criminal leaders of the era, he chose instead to join the growing Republican Party. The incident reflected both the intersection of politics and crime during the 1920s and the growing dominance of the local Republican Party in profiting from unlawful activities.

The fuel that built the underground alcohol economy was a systemic relationship between criminal masterminds in the city and government officials.

The most powerful men attained their positions through connections to lawful authorities. By the beginning of 1920, a mere six months after the beginning of the Prohibition era, special investigator George Murdock estimated that federal employees, politicians, and police had shared between them over two hundred thousand dollars in protection money. By the end of 1933, participants in the illegal booze economy had paid hundreds of millions of dollars in graft. These systems of monetary exchange provided an alternative source of capital for both governmental officials and members of the criminal underworld. While police and federal officials installed fear of the law into criminals in the pre-Prohibition era, by the 1920s, the profits and power of bootleggers reversed the situation so that enforcement officials were apprehensive of many lawbreakers. As a symbolic transformation, according to the *Tribune*, no longer did residents bother to take their hats off when they entered the local federal building, as they held little esteem for the government.¹

Larger illegal alcohol operations relied on governmental protection. Sustaining distribution networks, particularly of beer, required this syndicated assistance. Organization heads who had the closest relations with city hall, legal authorities, and enforcement agencies succeeded the most. This development was largely due to the political environment of the time.²

Institutional support was critical for mass violations of the law to occur. The evolution of an underworld in Chicago tied to the production, distribution, and sale

¹*Chicago Daily News*, 10 January, 1920, 5 October, 1926, 24 February, 1929.

²Jane Addams, "A Decade of Prohibition," *Survey*, 1 October, 1929, 8.

of illegal alcohol was largely a top-down phenomenon. As the *Chicago Daily News* interpreted the situation after over six months of wartime Prohibition, “the demoralization [was] from the top.” Municipal and enforcement officials tolerated, encouraged, and profited from violations of Prohibition laws.³

Building on a system of graft and corruption among members of the city government, enforcement officers, and criminal leaders that had developed in the previous century as a result of the illegality of prostitution and gambling, a larger, more elaborate and inclusive network of syndicated crime arose in the city. The structure of graft that developed in the 1920s was the successor to a network of protection decades old orchestrated by Democratic aldermen “Bathhouse” John Coughlin and “Hinky Dink” Michael Kenna. Rooted in the First Ward Democratic Club, Coughlin and Kenna established a systemic method of profiting from crime. Through their organization, gambling hall and brothel operators paid money to ward politicians and police captains and the mayor’s office. This payment allowed them to stay in business and stay clear of arrest. Unlike future groups, Coughlin and Kenna’s organization was contained to the old First Ward. Longtime aldermen Johnny Powers, or Johnny De Pow, oversaw a similar system of graft in the old Nineteenth Ward.⁴

During the Prohibition era networks such as Coughlins’s and Kenna’s

³ *Chicago Daily News*, 5 April, 1920.

⁴For an detailed description of the substructure that arose between criminal leaders and politicians in the first decades of the twentieth century in Chicago see Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, *Lords of the Levee: The Story of Bathhouse John and Hinky Dink* (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1944).

burgeoned into citywide enterprises, usually based within local Republican Party organizations. An unprecedented consolidation of politicians, policeman, ward “bosses,” “lieutenants,” and other criminal figures blossomed during the 1920s that profited from the toleration of illegal activity. These networks of relationships and cash flows between public officials, enforcement officers, and the underworld assisted lawbreakers and made their illegal activities stable and lucrative. The more money criminal leaders earned, the more funds they could offer for protection and bribery and the more power they attained.⁵

Through their connections with city hall, police courts, and enforcement officials, ward politicians offered invaluable assistance. Ward committeemen and aldermen maintained the ability to influence police departments and regulate the proliferation of commercial sex and gambling. Elected officials were additionally often responsible for disbursing graft, often referred to as “grease,” from the hands of criminal leaders to captains at cooperative police stations. After Prohibition began, they arranged liquor sales between saloonkeepers and their sources for alcohol. Ward politicians frequently met to discuss “cut in rates,” or the amount of money they received for each barrel of beer sold in their wards.⁶

The pre-1920 political structures of Chicago were an important element in how Prohibition evolved in the city. A major engine behind the growth of

⁵*Chicago Daily News*, 5 April, 1920.

⁶*Chicago Daily News*, 13 April, 1920; *Chicago Tribune*, 26 August, 1921, 30 September, 1921, 3 August, 12 September, 1923.

syndicated crime in these years was Mayor “Big Bill” Thompson. Between 1915 and 1923, under the direction of his political ally Fred Lundin, Thompson built one of the largest political organizations in the country. Contemporary commentators often compared it to Tammany Hall in New York City. Lundin and Thompson operated from their headquarters in the Union Hotel across from city hall, referred to as “little city hall.” While the organization was Republican, it often acted as an “octopus” that attracted members of both parties in order to secure control of the city, county, and state for more wide-open business policies that encouraged and profited from commercial sex, gambling, and, after Prohibition, the illicit sale of alcohol. While not maintaining direct links with all of the elements of the criminal world, Thompson created the political conditions that allowed for it to thrive. Even after Thompson’s ward organization was temporarily defeated in 1923, the city council and county board continued to have a wet majority and allowed for violations of the law to occur.⁷

Thompson had long profited from illegal activities in Chicago and was a major component to the pre-Prohibition criminal structure. For instance, Frank Loesch of the Chicago Crime Commission claimed that criminal leader Johnny Torrio contributed over a quarter of a million dollars to Thompson’s mayoral campaigns in

⁷*Chicago Daily News*, 21 April, 1920; Douglas Bukoski, *Big Bill Thompson, Chicago, and the Politics of Image* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan. *Big Bill of Chicago* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005); John M. Allswang, *Bosses, Machines, and Urban Voters*, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Harold F. Gosnell, *Machine Politics: Chicago Model* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

1919 and 1923.⁸ Thompson also was directly involved in the underworld. A group composed of followers of Thompson and his ward allies operated the Madhouse Cabaret inside the Sterling Hotel at 1859 West Madison Street, just west of downtown. According to the *Daily News*, the mayor himself owned a number of brothels, gambling halls, and blind pigs⁹ on the Near West Side on the block between Sangamon and Peoria Streets and Madison Street and Washington Boulevard on property that had belonged to his family for decades. In order to maintain a front, ward worker Henry Wolff leased these properties from Thompson. Famous and expensive madams, such as “Gold Tooth” Sadie, Rosie Smith, otherwise known as “Jew Rosie,” Maude Green, and Josephine Hudson operated the brothels on this block for years under the protection of the Thompson organization. After Prohibition began, they served illegal whiskey to their patrons without interference from police.¹⁰

Thompson's political success was due to numerous reasons outside his ideological stances on contemporary issues such as Prohibition, World War I, building projects, and labor conflicts. His closest political ally, Fred Lundin, was a skillful organizer who brought together various social factions to build wide support for Thompson. He astutely attracted the backing of a coalition of Chicagoans. Thompson relied heavily on the support of native-born, often Protestant, residents,

⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 20 November 1960.

⁹A “blind pig” referred to an illegal alcohol operation before Prohibition.

¹⁰*Chicago Daily News*, 7, 8 April, 1920.

as well as black, German, and Swedish voters in his mayoral victories in 1915 and 1919.¹¹ While gaining some votes among the working class, he was not as popular among newer immigrant groups due to his opposition to World War I and his public support of Prohibition in his early terms as mayor.¹² More than anything, his organization depended on the disbursement of almost three thousand city and county jobs and millions of dollars in contracts.¹³

The Thompson organization sprung from the Fred Lundin branch of the local Republican Party but often demonstrated a bipartisan tendency to work with Democratic politicians. This was particularly true in its desire to secure protection for illegal activities. Many Democrats fought for reform, but some willingly worked with Thompson and his organization. Traditionally, neither Democrats nor Republicans had a monopoly on tolerance for commercial sex and gambling and the systems of graft and protection that supported it. Both parties had anti-alcohol and moral reformers and each had members who allowed for a more wide-open business policy. While numerous Democrats may have had more connections with the city's underworld, the local Republicans became the primary party that governed syndicated crime during the late 1910 and 1920s. Criminal leaders, however, exploited toleration of both groups of party leaders to their benefit and by the early 1920s, underworld figures enjoyed strong alliances with both Republicans

¹¹George Schottenhamel, "How Big Bill Thompson Won Control of Chicago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Spring 1952), 33-35.

¹²Allswang, *Bosses, Machines, and Urban Voters*, 99-101; Bukowski, 113-114, 138.

¹³*Chicago Daily News*, 10 April, 1920, 10 April, 1931.

and Democrats. For instance, South Side overlords Johnny Torrio and Al Capone forged relations with longtime Democratic bosses Michael “Hinky Dink” Kenna and John Coughlin that placed the entire pre-1922 first ward under their control.¹⁴

Thompson relied on the cooperation of numerous individuals to build his citywide political organization. Having close relationships with cooperative officials within the city government was essential in linking the city administration to the cause of local criminal leaders. Morris Eller, who was the city sealer in Thompson’s first two terms and a powerful politician on the city’s West Side, was among his most trusted associates. Thompson appointed Eller as city collector in his third term. Eller profited greatly from allowing the continued operation of retail alcohol selling in much of the West Side.¹⁵

Another of Thompson’s close confidants was Dan Serritella, a member of the *Unione Siciliana* (Figure 29). During his service for Thompson, he became a crucial intermediary between the mayor and Johnny Torrio and Al Capone. Serritella was also a lieutenant in Capone’s organization. He was the recipient of many expensive gifts from criminal leaders and was allegedly so close to Capone that he often vacationed at his second home in Miami. In the mid 1920s, he became a state senator and in 1927 he began serving as city sealer in Thompson’s final administration. The first ward elected him committeeman in 1928, a post he held

¹⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 24 June, 1921, 20 July, 1952.

¹⁵*Chicago Daily News*, 28 August, 1920; Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, 47, 109, 116; Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect*, 185, 198, 200, 212.



Figure 29. Dan Serritella (*Chicago Tribune*)

until 1946. In this position, Serritella helped to coordinate the movement of illegal alcohol into the Loop. Law enforcement agencies eventually caught on to his activities. In 1931, after Anton Cermak replaced Thompson as mayor of Chicago, Serritella was tried for conspiracy for falsifying information during his time as city sealer. The discreet politician continued to play a key role in the development of organized crime and was a partner with Moses Annenberg in his media conglomeration in Chicago until his commitment to a psychiatric hospital in the early 1950s.¹⁶

¹⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 18 January, 20 February, 24 March, 30 April, 25 September, 1931, 9 July, 1946; Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, 217, 266, 307; Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect*, 185, 192, 207, 212, 268; Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*, 172, 202, 217, 290, 303.

In order to have influence in the city and the underworld, Thompson needed to control individual wards and the politicians who represented them. The Chicago City Council and the Cook County Board of Commissioners were the two most important governmental bodies in which allies were helpful. Chicago had thirty-five wards until 1922 when the city implemented a fifty-ward plan. While many of the city's wards were already under the influence of politicians who advocated a more open business policy in the 1910s, their influence greatly expanded in the early years of Prohibition. During Mayor Thompson's first two terms, from 1915 to 1923, he successfully won control of thirty-four of third-five wards for his city hall organization. He additionally attained a majority of supporters on the Cook County Board.¹⁷

Once a ward was in Thompson's political control, he then implemented systems of graft. Similar to those social and fraternal clubs that organized criminal activity, a system of political clubs existed as well. In the early years of Prohibition, Mayor Bill Thompson's Business Men's and Business Women's Clubs were among the most effective tools in accomplishing this task. A citywide Thompson Club headquarters was located downtown on West Randolph Street. Each ward maintained a separate office. Members paid fees to belong to the organization, which promised defense from arrest. By placing a picture of William Thompson in the business, enforcement officers knew they belonged to the club and would not harass them. Enforcement officials often ended up investigating those

¹⁷However, unlike Anton Cermak, he was never able to control the county board presidency.

saloonkeepers, madams, and gambling hall operators who did not pay the club fees and have Thompson's picture on their wall. Through this system, much of city government allowed mass violations of Prohibition. These clubs earned Thompson a great deal of support in many districts that heavily profited from illegal endeavors. Drinking establishments thrived in wards where Thompson Clubs had the strongest alliances with police precincts, such as the East Chicago Avenue, New City, and Maxwell Street stations.¹⁸

Madams and gambling hall operators joined Thompson clubs at the beginning of his administration if they expected to operate without interference. If the "city hall machine" maintained loyal politicians in the ward, then Thompson offered protection to illegal liquor sellers and distributors, in addition to commercial sex and gambling operations. However, being a part of the club did not always guarantee police would not investigate them. Some precincts had reform-minded cops who refused to follow orders. By sending uncooperative police captains and lieutenants to other stations, however, illegal activity flourished. Many madams and gambling hall operators attained great influence during Thompson's regime as mayor. After Prohibition, saloon and hotelkeepers flocked to the Thompson Clubs. Former saloon, hotel, and cabaret owners became a major component of the Thompson organization in just the first few months of the Wartime Prohibition Act. Not only did they offer protection from police interference

¹⁸*Chicago Daily News*, 24 February, 18 August, 1920; *Chicago Tribune*, 18 December, 1920, 15 November 1920.

but they also put pressure on federal agents and officials not to prosecute certain individuals if offered enough money.¹⁹

Prostitutes composed a large percentage of the members of Thompson Clubs, most often within the Thompson Businesswomen's Clubs. For instance, as director of the club in the Eighteenth Ward, a madam referred to as "Mary Ann the Gunn," became a primary player in the area's underworld.²⁰ Saloonkeepers additionally used Thompson Clubs to avoid arrest. Italian immigrant and Thompson Club member Caesar Dal Pino represented the close relations between ward bosses and the illegal alcohol business. Dal Pino, a naturalized citizen, operated a poolroom on the first floor and a restaurant and bar on the second floor of his building at 808 West Madison Street on the Near West Side. He also paid his dues to the Thompson Club, assisted ward boss "Big Jim" Fleming, and served as a bondman for numerous criminals. His connection to the mayor, however, was not enough for him to avoid the federal government. In early 1920, agents arrested him and his bartender Ralph Ciucci for selling whisky.²¹

Thompson Clubs, however, were not the sole political organizations that built the underground alcohol economy. Following Thompson's exit from the mayor's seat in 1923, the Thompson Clubs disbanded. Other groups, such as the Republican

¹⁹*Chicago Daily News*, 24 February, 18 August, 1920.

²⁰*Chicago Daily News*, 24 February, 18 August, 1920.

²¹*Chicago Daily News*, 24 February, 18 August, 1920; USDC, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Illinois, Criminal Dockets, Volume 12, Case Number 7014; 1920 United States Census.

Boosters' Club took their place. Headed by Joseph Bagheria, the Republican Boosters' Club arranged for the operations of stills and the distribution of alcohol. While not as large as the city's biggest syndicates, the group managed to stay in business until 1928 when federal agents infiltrated their ring.²²

The Eighteenth Ward presented an example of a prominent Thompson Club and demonstrated how the mayor associated with criminal elements. The ward was a longtime center of syndicated crime. The Thompson Businessmen's Club maintained a headquarters at 1438 West Jackson Boulevard and had numerous members. Within the ward's boundaries was West Madison Street, which for decades was a popular nightlife area with gambling halls, brothels, dance halls, cabarets, and saloons. While the administration of Carter Harrison, Jr. greatly reduced the spread of crime in the area, during Thompson's first mayoral administration, numerous brothels and gambling dens opened up. After a few months of Prohibition, the Juvenile Protective Association described the district as worse "than at any other time within six years."²³

Thompson was able to influence the Eighteenth Ward largely through his "lieutenant" Democrat Barney Grogan, a longtime ward boss. Grogan, like other ward bosses, aligned himself with the criminal underworld, an alliance that often backfired on him. According to the *Chicago Daily News*, Grogan often employed the

²²*Chicago Tribune*, 6 February, 1929.

²³*Chicago Daily News*, 8 April, 1920.

assistance of gunmen, such as Clarence White, an associate of Earl “Hymie” Weiss,²⁴ to oversee the ward “with an iron hand.”²⁵ While Grogan and his allies faced opposition from moral reformers, the Thompson organization nonetheless effectively maintained power. Although Grogan lost his alderman seat in 1920, his ally “Big Jim” Fleming became the ward’s committeeman, and “boss of the Eighteenth ward,” defeating Prohibition-supporter Homer K. Galpin, thus retaining influence for the syndicate in the ward. Fleming subsequently made the area friendly territory for commercial sex, gambling, and illegal liquor selling.²⁶ During the election, he transferred uncooperative police officers from the nearby Desplaines Street station to the Woodlawn station where they would not interfere with the running of illegal endeavors, gaining him favor among voters.²⁷

The Eighteenth Ward demonstrated the willingness of the Thompson organization to break party lines in order to protect and profit from illegal businesses. Although many officials in the Eighteenth Ward were Democrats, they willingly made alliances with Thompson as they recognized that he controlled the systems of graft. These bipartisan agreements often helped ensure control of the ward. These sorts of arrangements were common in other wards as well.²⁸

²⁴Weiss would later become the primary criminal leader on the North Side of Chicago until his murder in 1926.

²⁵*Chicago Daily News*, 27 February, 1920; *Chicago Tribune*, 28 October, 1912.

²⁶*Chicago Daily News*, 13, 28 April, 1920.

²⁷*Chicago Daily News*, 8 April, 1920.

²⁸*Chicago Daily News*, 8 April, 1920.

“Diamond” Joe, or Guiseppe, Esposito represented the unclear line between the world of crime and politics in Chicago, even before Prohibition. Esposito carried on him a “certificate of character” signed by Senator Deneen, Mayor Thompson, and thirteen other prominent Chicagoans. Italian immigrants living on the Near West Side were attracted to Esposito because he shared a common background and maintained many of their values. Esposito also owned the Bella Napoli Café at 850 South Halsted Street where he served homemade Italian wines and cuisine. Garnering much support from Italians, he made an unsuccessful bid for United States Senator in the 1920s.²⁹

Among the ward politicians to enter the alcohol business was alderman Titus Haffa of the Forty-Third Ward on the North Side. Haffa, a loyal member of Thompson’s Republican organization, was not satisfied merely offering protection for profit. He forged many relationships in the world of bootlegging and quickly entered the business as a whiskey dealer on the Near North Side. Haffa coordinated the construction of a number of stills throughout the North Side. At the height of his business, the *Tribune* claimed he was responsible for over five million dollars in alcohol sales. Despite being a public official, enforcement agents eventually caught on to him. A jury in the Chicago federal court found Haffa guilty of conspiracy to violate Prohibition laws in 1928. He served two years in Leavenworth federal penitentiary and paid a ten thousand dollar fine. Haffa’s trial and conviction was

²⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 31 March, 1929.

among the first real “higher-ups” punished for their involvement in the underworld.³⁰

Some ward politicians took advantage of their positions to directly operate illegal manufacturing or distribution businesses themselves. Several became investors in wildcat breweries. For instance, Eleventh Ward alderman Leonard Rutkowski bought the White Eagle Products Company, an alleged near beer brewery, and continued to produce real beer until federal agents arrested him in 1921.³¹

The involvement of police in the alcohol trade was obvious early. In August 1919, less than two months after the beginning of wartime Prohibition, a shuffle broke out at a saloon at 5858 South Halsted Street, south of Packingtown in the Englewood community. A policeman tried to confiscate a bottle of whiskey from the proprietor, “Ed” Hoffman. When Hoffman refused, an unknown man then shot the policeman while another officer shot a different man who was fighting with the policeman. At the time of the murders, fifteen constables were present drinking. The event was one of the first signs for Chicago residents that the police were involved in the illegal alcohol economy.³²

The cooperation and participation of the various enforcement officials was critical in the implementation of systems of protection. Controlling municipal police

³⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 9 July, 1931.

³¹*Chicago Daily News*, 13 April, 1920; *Chicago Tribune*, 26 August, 1921, 30 September, 1921, 12 September, 1923, 29 March, 1928.

³²*Chicago Tribune*, 27, 29 August, 1919.

stations was a fundamental aspect of dominating a district for the benefit of the Thompson organization, as well as for any underworld syndicate. "Everybody who's in the copper game knows where the stuff comes from, where it's made, and how it's delivered... Some little fellow has to take a rap but that's only done to show that the coppers are doing something," explained an informant for the Juvenile Protective Association. Police received both graft money and free drinks from alcohol proprietors. When they received neither, they most likely raided the establishment. At times when local precinct captains did not tolerate graft, officers accepted impromptu gifts from Prohibition, receiving a sum of cash in exchange for the violation not being booked. Police officers additionally often assisted ward henchmen and workers in helping to register fraudulent voters.³³

Building on the structure of bribery in place for gambling and prostitution, the Chicago police force became thoroughly compromised during the 1920s and 1930s. The Chicago Police Department was largely composed of residents of Irish heritage. Irish Chicagoans had maintained this presence on the police force since the late nineteenth century.³⁴ Chicago's force consisted of forty-two police captains and approximately six thousand policemen below them. Between 1920 and 1930, the force also was divided into five districts controlled by deputy commissioners. Both these commissioners and the police captains had no qualms about making

³³"Roadhouse Survey, July 25 to August 31, 1929," 7, Papers of the Juvenile Protective Association, Box 8, folder 106; *Chicago Tribune*, 8 October, 1926, 13 March, 1927.

³⁴Francis O'Neill, *Sketchy Recollections of an Eventful Life in Chicago* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

profit from laws of morality and often oversaw systems of graft. Captain, lieutenants, and other ranking officers took cash from members of almost any criminal organization. One Bureau of Prohibition official claimed that except for one personal friend, he did “not know of an honest captain on the force.” Many policemen became integral to the largest bootlegging rings in the city. Chicago cops arranged for the exchange of money between law enforcement officials and beer kings. They would travel to retail establishments to collect cash from the keepers. Officers also guarded beer trucks against arrest and hijacking.³⁵

The support of police captains was critical in making a police station susceptible to institutionalized bribery. Captain Dennis Mallory presents an example of the attitude of some commanders toward Prohibition. Federal agents caught him assisting in the hijacking of a load of whiskey in 1921 and he was let go from the force. He then assisted criminal leaders Terrance Druggan and Frankie Lake to purchase a brewery. In 1924, he was reinstated in the police force. By the early 1930s, Mallory was again a captain at the East Side station, where he made the district safe for the sale of alcohol.³⁶

In Chicago, a number of politicians and police officers took part in the Torrio group. Sergeant Daniel O'Connor was among the key figures. O'Connor acted as the payoff man who disbursed graft money to police officers. He had close relations

³⁵Richard C. Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect: Chicago Politics and Police Corruption from the Lager Beer Riot to the Summerdale Scandal, 1855-1960* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998); *Chicago Daily News*, 8 April, 1920; *Chicago Tribune*, 3 December, 1927.

³⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 25 January, 1924, 11 August, 1931.

with Johnnie Torrio and Dean O'Bannion. O'Bannion and North Side criminal leaders relied on the protection of local police as well. Lieutenant Mike Grady was a prominent figure in the development of O'Bannion's network of alcohol distribution.³⁷

While officers in all police districts participated in criminal activity, the underworld controlled some stations more than other ones, with the East Chicago Avenue, Maxwell Street, Desplaines Street, Cottage Grove Avenue, and the Deering stations receiving the most critical press. During the 1920s, more and more stations came under the influence of criminal organizations.³⁸

The Maxwell Street Station in the old Twentieth Ward was one of the most thoroughly corrupted precincts and provides an example of how politics, police, and criminal leaders interacted. Republican ward committeeman Morris Eller, his son Judge Emanuel Eller, and Democratic ward "boss" Patrick J. Egan transformed the Maxwell Street station into what the *Daily News* called "a clearing house for every conceivable kind of booze transaction in which the ring has figured." The Maxwell Street police station precinct, situated between Harrison Street and Sixteenth Street and Wood Street and the Chicago River, was located within the pre-1922 Twentieth Ward and covered both the Nineteenth and Twentieth Wards. Criminal leaders learned their skills in the Maxwell Street precinct before the Prohibition era. All ventured into illegal alcohol once the Eighteenth Amendment became effective.

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 30 May, 1924.

³⁸*Chicago Daily News*, 23 August, 1920, 19 November, 1920.

Located in the Maxwell Street precinct were a number of warehouses that illegal alcohol distributors used for the storage of whisky. Davey Miller's brother Hirschie became bailiff of the Maxwell Street police court in the early 1920s. With Eller's backing, Hirschie Miller and his assistants distributed whiskey to a large section of the West Side in the early years of Prohibition. Former police lieutenant, and future assistant in Dean O'Bannion's organization, Sam "Nails" Morton, acted as a bodyguard for Miller and served as a "go between" for police officers and saloonkeepers.³⁹

Prohibition affected graft within the Maxwell Street precinct. During the first half of the 1920s, the Genna family came to dominate the system of syndication in the area. The network they set up demonstrated how the police and criminal leaders were interwoven. Based in the Maxwell Street station area, the Gennas enjoyed one of the largest systems of graft in the city. By 1925, they paid more than \$6,500 a month to the local police precinct station in addition to supplying police with discounted liquor. Over four hundred uniformed police officers, including many captains and lieutenants, visited the Genna's headquarters each month to show their badges and collect their money. Captains received \$500 a month while other officers got \$200. Representatives of the state's attorney's office of Cook County stopped by to gather their share of the profits as well.⁴⁰

Police officers, however, were not merely involved with graft and protection

³⁹*Chicago Daily News*, 28 August, 1920.

⁴⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 15 June, 1925, 9 October, 1926.

but participated in networks of bootlegging themselves. According to chief of police Edmund Fitzmorris, at least half of the force directly took part in the activities of illegal alcohol production, distribution, or selling.⁴¹ Many officers served as alcohol runners while other policemen ran rings of hijackers, using their powers as officers to pull over drivers and force them to give up their supply. Others used forceful methods to make saloonkeepers purchase their alcohol. Many policemen worked their way quite high in the hierarchy of the illicit alcohol market.⁴²

Leo O'Neil, a desk sergeant at the Woodlawn precinct police station, was among the numerous officers who had no qualms about using the Eighteenth Amendment to supplement his income. In his alley garage at 4130 Grand Boulevard, O'Neil housed a variety of stills. Federal agents nabbed O'Neil in 1924 for manufacturing and selling alcohol. The *Tribune* described O'Neil as "the master rum maker of the city" and "the most complete and illicit distiller and bootlegger ever seized in Chicago." While the statement was an exaggeration, O'Neil represented the blurry line between enforcement officials and crime. O'Neil carried out his business with little interference from neighborhood criminal leaders because he held the authority of the law. He produced liquor for a wide clientele, which included a number of fellow police officers.⁴³

The Cook County Sheriff's Office was a critical component of syndicated

⁴¹*Chicago Tribune*, 25 September, 13 October, 1921.

⁴²*Chicago Tribune*, 31 July, 1923.

⁴³*Chicago Tribune*, 22, 30 May, 1924, 14 September, 1924.

crime as well. Thompson and criminal leaders maintained considerable pull with many members of sheriff's office. Nick Juffra, a deputy sheriff of Cook County until 1924, was among the most influential bootlegger-law-enforcers in the early 1920s. Juffra was deeply involved in the world of illicit alcohol selling and distribution. In 1924, federal agents finally prosecuted Juffra for manufacturing, furnishing, possessing, and delivering alcohol. After conviction, Judge James H. Wilkerson sentenced him to two years in Leavenworth prison. When he returned to Chicago after serving his term, he immediately reentered the booze economy and eventually became a lieutenant for Capone organization of alcohol distributors. No longer did he serve as an agent of the law but worked for the syndicate fulltime. Federal attorneys prosecuted him along with Capone and sixty-six other defendants in 1931 for numerous violations of the Prohibition laws.⁴⁴

Some officers within the sheriff's office were integral to the city's largest criminal organizations. Deputy Sheriff of Cook County Daniel McFall was a key component of Johnny Torrio's syndicate. McFall organized police officers on the South Side. In 1923, Torrio utilized him to retaliate against the rival South Side organization headed by "Spike" O'Donnell. Either McFall or his companion Frank McErlane shot the notorious criminal and beer runner Jerry O'Connor in Joseph Kepka's saloon at 5358 South Lincoln Street. A jury acquitted McFall of the murder

⁴⁴United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Chicago Division, Criminal Dockets, Volume 24, case number 12475, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 9 October, 1931.

in 1924.⁴⁵

Cook County Sheriff Peter Hoffman, who served as the county coroner until 1922, was the most powerful figure within the Sheriff's office to serve as a critical participant in the bootlegging syndicate. Torrio and Capone's syndicate supplied Hoffman with an ample amount of money in order for him to win election to the sheriff's office in 1922. In return Hoffman did what he could to keep members of Torrio's criminal organization out of confinement. In 1925, investigators discovered that Hoffman allowed Torrio's ally Terrence Druggan and his partner Frankie Lake to disperse cash to guards and other employees at the Cook County jail in exchange for special privileges. Witnesses charged that Hoffman was in direct control of this treatment and saw to it that they were treated with unique liberties, such as sleeping outside cells. While Hoffman was acquitted of charges of interfering with justice, he served thirty days in the Cook County jail for contempt of court while he was still acting as sheriff. He subsequently resigned from his position in late 1926. Ben Hecht, one-time writer for the *Chicago Daily News*, later devised a play about him titled "The Front Page" describing his scandalous career as a public servant.⁴⁶

Federal agents working under the Prohibition Unit within the Department of Treasury, and its successor, the Bureau of Prohibition within the Justice Department, were not as controlled by the Thompson organization as the local police department. Federal officers made many more arrests than the Chicago

⁴⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 9 September, 1923; Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, 50-52.

⁴⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 22 December, 1926, 8 August, 1979.

Police Department or the Sheriff's Office of Cook County and often complained about the lack of cooperation they received from the local forces. Many federal officials were not susceptible to bribes. Numerous agents took personal interest in the enforcement of the law. Some men even used questionable methods, such as using unauthorized violence and operating speakeasies themselves to discover participants in the illegal trade. Director of Prohibition enforcement in Chicago Frank D. Richardson vocally complained about blackmail and bribery. Members of the one of the largest whiskey rings in Chicago, he alleged, took pictures of him and another women walking down the street in an attempt at blackmail. Further, Richardson claimed that L. T. Cox, president of a wholesale liquor dealer, offered him five thousand dollars to call off his investigation of a whiskey ring that spanned through Illinois, New York, and Kentucky. He refused to cooperate. Many of Richardson's colleagues were just as committed to the job. Brice Armstrong was among these "untouchable" agents. Armstrong was said to have turned down more than \$25,000 in "hush money" and to have been responsible for the closing of most wildcat breweries in the mid 1920s. His activities made him into a target for underworld leaders. Criminal leaders Terrace Druggan and Frankie Lake retaliated against him after an arrest, bombing his home in early 1924.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, some federal Prohibition agents responsible for enforcing the laws were prone to corruption. Prohibition officials working in Chicago's

⁴⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 14, 23, 25 February, 1921, 28 July, 1931; *Chicago Daily News*, 24 November, 1920, 17 March, 1924.

downtown headquarters in the Federal Building at the corner of Dearborn Street and Adams Street often personally opposed the law by breaking it themselves. Many agents drank in nearby speakeasies, such as one eight doors away at 25 West Adams Street in the Loop.⁴⁸

Moreover, many enforcement officers in Chicago used their positions to get free drinks for themselves, either by taking confiscated alcohol or accepting drinks from illegal businesses. A number of agents took bribes and some even demanded them from retailers when they were found out. “Shakedowns” by government agents became more common as Prohibition continued and caused many illicit liquor dealers to despise the law and federal agents. “Shakedown rings” involved enforcement officials at all levels of government and forced tens of thousands of dollars from non-compliant saloonkeepers. For instance, Marshall J. Ohrman served seven months in the Waukegan jail after trying to extort \$200 from a drug store proprietor on Chicago’s North Side, one of hundreds of his victims. Some officials working at the federal building offered law-violators the chance to give them thousand dollars for “bail” when the opportunity presented itself, which they would he personally keep in exchange for releasing the offender.⁴⁹ By mid 1921, the Chicago headquarters of the Prohibition Unit relieved seventy of its one hundred agents in an attempt to “clean up.” Bribed agents were often able to “tip off” or warn illegal business operators that a search warrant had been sworn out for their

⁴⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 19 December, 1931.

⁴⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 12 February, 7, 30 September, 1921, 23 January, 1923, 3 December, 1927.

establishment or that a raid was planned. Further, federal investigators discovered in 1927 that individuals responsible for padlocking places that had received injunctions were receiving payments for as much as a thousand dollars. In return they would place notices of injunction in dark closets away from view.⁵⁰

Internal revenue agents—who were responsible for approving the sale of legal bonded alcohol and who helped to enforce the law—frequently used their positions to increase their income. For instance, Harry Mager, a collector of internal revenue in Chicago, viewed his career in the federal government as an opportunity for great profit. At the outset of Prohibition, Mager, the son of German immigrants, became the chief of the revenue agents within the Department of Justice. Along with his partner, state representative Benjamin Mitchell, he extracted over \$50,000 in graft money from speakeasy and roadhouse owners in the metropolitan region. Mager and Mitchell were then able to “fix” court cases and even prevent arrests from happening. The two allegedly made another \$400,000 reselling confiscated alcohol. Hiding the liquor at a friend’s apartment, the duo then sold it to the owners of retail establishments. Meanwhile, federal investigators were watching Mager’s every move for eighteenth months. In late 1922, he faced federal charges. With Benjamin Epstein, a skilled and experienced attorney in dealing with Prohibition cases in Chicago, as his lawyer, Mager managed to have the case against him dismissed due to “technical flaws” in the indictments.⁵¹

⁵⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 13 March, 1927.

⁵¹*Chicago Tribune*, 16 July, 1922, 29 December, 1930.

President Hoover formed a massive investigation into lawlessness in the United States in 1929, known as the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, or the Wickersham Commission. The Commission attempt to eliminate corruption and graft within the Prohibition Unit. The government set in place a new system with which to catch violators of the Eighteenth Amendment. The agency changed its name to the Bureau of Prohibition and transferred from the Department of Treasury to the Department of Justice. The move did little to increase pay for agents and ultimately kept in place systems of graft.⁵²

Members of the judiciary system in Chicago additionally participated in syndicated booze selling. Corrupt judges, bailiffs, and other officials were found within the ranks of the federal and municipal courts in Chicago and the surrounding areas. While it is almost impossible to prove such activities, stories of them proliferated. The fact that a majority of cases were dismissed in some manner perhaps corroborates these claims of the importance of the judicial system to the growth of the illegal alcohol economy.⁵³

Participation in a syndicate was not a guarantee to stay clear of arrest, particularly if one played a smaller role in the system. Despite the syndication system in place, law enforcement officers from the federal, county, and municipal level made thousands of arrests. Enforcement officers, particularly federal agents,

⁵²Zechariah Chafee, Walter H. Pollak, and Carl S. Stern, *Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement* (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931).

⁵³*Chicago Tribune*, 31 January, 1925.

uncovered the workings of lawbreakers and brought them to court. Further, some police officers and agents often took it upon themselves to arrest law violators who had paid for protection, causing conflict within many stations. Speakeasy owners often understandably became angry when their graft funds provided little protection. For instance, Julian Vlamynck resisted his arrest in 1931 telling police officers, "Listen you dirty bums. I pay my protection. The captain in this district is my friend. If you don't get out I'll get your job." Vlamynck physically attacked the officers before being apprehended. Instead of being freed, the officers took him in front of a special grand jury that was investigating graft in the police force. He was one of thousands of proprietors caught off guard when their systems of security failed them.⁵⁴

Although trials became more common, offenders—particularly influential ones—continued to face little resistance to their operations. Even when defendants were found guilty and incarcerated, they faced few obstacles to continuing their lifestyle. Prisoners were often given lax treatment and enjoyed special privileges, particularly if they maintained a prominent position within the underworld. For instance, many inmates took advantage of the developing networks of bootlegging that arose within the Cook County jail and profited during their incarceration. The prime example of this loose handling was provided in 1931 as Al Capone stayed there during his trial and continued running his business.⁵⁵

⁵⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 21 February, 1931.

⁵⁵*Chicago Daily News*, 8 April 1920, 18 May, 1921; *Chicago Tribune*, 14 September, 1926.

As early as 1920, the crime situation in Chicago and the inability of police to enforce Prohibition and other laws of morality, along with the public pressure to clean up the city, led Thompson to replace Chief of Police John J. Garrity with Charles C. Fitzmorris. While the change provided a new public face for the police, it did little to ultimately change the systems of graft in place. The appointment of Fitzmorris was the first in a long line of chief resignations and police shakeups in efforts to clean up the force.

The largest of the efforts to reform city police stations and enforce Prohibition laws came with the election of reform mayor William Dever in 1923. While he claimed to be against the idea of Prohibition, Dever sought to enforce the law because he believed that would bring order to the city. He selected Morgan A. Collins as chief of police. Collins subsequently fired every police officer who he had known to be involved in the illegal alcohol network. Collins, with the assistance of federal agents, closed sixteen breweries in the region and revoked the city licenses of thousands of “soft-drink parlors.” Dever’s determination to enforce the law briefly put an end to much of the excitement of the jazz age and resulted in new challenges from the city’s underworld leaders.⁵⁶

While these events posed a threat to Thompson's city hall organization, they never stymied the growth of the syndicate but merely altered where it was located and fractured some of the alliances within the organized graft system. The greatest

⁵⁶Douglas Bukowski, “William Dever and Prohibition: The Elections of 1923 and 1927,” *Chicago History* 7 (Summer 1978), 109-118.

effect was the dissolution of agreements between neighborhood leaders and increased violence as the order Thompson's administration brought to the underworld vanished. The unity between different factions of the alcohol syndicate splintered and led to competition against Torrio, seen in the rise of O'Bannion's organization. Police protection continued, despite the efforts of Dever.

Mayor Dever's campaigns to eradicate illegal alcohol trafficking, as all other attempts to stridently enforce Prohibition in Chicago, only helped to cement Torrio's dominance. No other criminal organization was able to take advantage of the suburbs and outlying towns the way Torrio did. Burnham, Cicero, Joliet, and a number of other localities all brought necessary territory and wealth that outpaced other organizations. Torrio and Capone established a system of payoff for police in sections of Chicago and outlying towns similar to the Genna's in the Maxwell Street precinct. Originally based in the Levee, Torrio's group established a second network of graft throughout Chicago and nearby suburbs. In Cicero, town President Joseph Klenha and Chief of Police Ted Svoboda were heavily involved in the operation.⁵⁷

Due to the chaos unleashed in his attempt to strictly enforce Prohibition, Dever lost support and Thompson defeated him in 1927. Thompson subsequently appointed Michael Hughes as the "top cop." With the return of Thompson as mayor, corruption within the municipal force deteriorated between 1927 and 1933 under Hughes and his successor John H. Alcock. Anton Cermak's chief, while helping to suppress Al Capone's empire, allowed other illegal establishments to operate wide

⁵⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 5, 8 October, 1926.

open. Regardless of who was chief of police and what actions they took to suppress alcohol, the informal economy continued to grow throughout the city.⁵⁸

Governmental and enforcement powers created the conditions for the continuation of drinking in Chicago. While politicians, police chiefs, or criminal leaders might have succeeded each other, the same system of graft persisted. While Mayor Dever attempted to eradicate the power of gang chiefs, his efforts were futile against his numerous opponents. These factors led to the development of one of the largest underground economies in the history of the country. The increasing dominance of the alcohol underworld, assisted by components of the government, helped to ensure the failure of the Eighteenth Amendment in Chicago. Prohibition multiplied the number of politicians, police stations, and legal officials participating in networks of graft. This transformation worked to increase the population's cynicism toward government and the political process.

With the assistance of politicians, underworld leaders gained a position in the early 1920s in Chicago society that previous criminal figures did not attain. To many observers, it was neither "capital" nor "labor" that was the structural authority that influenced society, but instead the world of crime. Further, with a stamp of approval from ward organizations, thousands of men, and even women,

⁵⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 4 January, 1924; Allsop, *The Bootleggers*, 51-52, 85. When Thompson decided to run for mayor again in 1927, most of his organization was still in place. However, his support had shifted. No longer did he receive the votes of native Chicagoans but instead was popular among the city's immigrant and second generation population because no longer did he vocally support the Eighteenth Amendment. Largely because of his "wetter than Lake Michigan" viewpoint on Prohibition, he attracted the support of many different voters in 1927. Thus the new Thompson ward system provided a framework for the later socially heterogeneous organization that Anton Cermak would organize.

turned to the underground economy to make a living or add to their income.

Without the political framework discussed in this chapter, the underworld could not have advanced to the extent it did. Likewise, Thompson's organization could not have attained its influence without the help of criminal leaders. They fed off each other. This system was, of course, almost as old as the city, operating through gambling and commercial sex. However, syndication was for the most part an isolated activity that did not affect the city at large before 1919. Thompson's lax attitude toward Prohibition and crimes of morality helped to build the largest criminal operations in the city's history. However, during his third term, residents turned against him. This opposition to Thompson ensured both the failure of his political aspirations and the unpopularity of the Republican Party in Chicago into the twentieth century.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RETAIL OUTLETS OF CHICAGO'S BOOZEDOM

Dorothy Patterson, who worked as a milliner for most of the 1920s, started a lunch counter at her two-flat home at 507 North Wabash Avenue on the Near North Side after she lost her job in the late 1920s. Her customers soon encouraged her to serve alcohol and she responded to their requests by offering an assortment of liquors and cocktails. Patterson's brother-Johnny-decided to expand the operation when he discovered her activities. He began selling beer, which usually required syndicate assistance due to the bulky nature of the product. Managing to avoid the Capone organization, which controlled the downtown area, Johnny Patterson purchased his booze from Joseph, "Rabbit," Connell, a rogue manufacturer and distributor who sold in the neighborhood. Building a larger clientele, the Subway soon hired a hostess to encourage customers to drink more and redecorated. Patrons entered through the main entrance with a neon sign and a canopy over it without giving a password or code. Once inside, visitors were inspected and led downstairs where they ordered drinks at the "world's longest bar." With a capacity for around 300 guests, the Subway Café, known as the Goat's nest to patrons, was a fairly modest sized venue despite the attention it received. According to contemporary *Tribune* reporter James Doherty, "no history of Chicago

during Prohibition would be complete without mention of the Goat's Nest."¹

The Subway Café was one of the tens of thousands of retail outlets where Chicagoans purchased alcohol that offered a different environment than pre-Prohibition establishments. The brother and sister team who started and operated it were among the increasing number of residents, often working together with relatives, who worked outside the alcohol trade before Prohibition and who made a living selling illegal booze afterward.

While Prohibition might have succeeded in eliminating the cultural institution of the saloon, the "speakeasy," a general term used to include many types of establishments, quickly replaced it during the 1920s. The appellation developed as many businesses began locking their front doors and asking patrons to keep their chatter to a minimum, or to "speak easy."² The speakeasy developed into a major component of Chicago's economy and culture. The city possessed more elaborate and luxurious drinking establishments in the country. There was no shortage of proprietors willing to operate these illegal businesses. The greatest number of participants in the illegal alcohol economy came from the owners of retail—both on-sale and off-sale—establishments. In the summer of 1923, speaking before the Better Government Association, Chief of Police Morgan Collins declared that there were "10,000 illicit booze joints" in the city. By the end of the "noble experiment," many observers estimated the city had up to twenty thousand drinking sites, with fifteen

¹*Chicago Tribune*, 25 March, 1951.

²At the dawn of the Prohibition era, "blind pig" was the prevalent term for an illegal drinking operation. During the 1920s, they acquired the appellation of the speakeasy.

thousand being a common figure newspapers cited. According to one source, for every pre-Prohibition saloon, two illicit establishments had developed.³

The desire of residents to drink allowed for the continuation of retail alcohol dealers. While men and women used alcohol in Western culture for thousands of years previously, the act attained a novel sense of excitement during the Prohibition era. An investigation of Italian immigrants by the National Federation of Settlements in 1926 turned up one interesting response. One man who refused to drink before the Eighteenth Amendment began a habit of drinking whiskey and gin afterward. Asked why, he replied, "Because it is hard to get and we are not suppose to have it." The statement reflected the desire of many residents to drink merely due to the fact that it was restricted and considered dangerous.⁴

The "speakeasy" was not a uniform entity but instead had many forms. Neither did it have a definitive appearance. Pre-Prohibition customs influenced the evolution of retail outlets. Places of illegal drinking maintained different atmospheres and customs based on the ethnicity, language, class, and cultural background of the owner and neighborhood in which it was located. Each ethnic group in Chicago had its own type of tradition of illegal drinking establishments and each had their preferred beverages. Irish and Americans favored saloons that served whiskey, Germans had their saloons and beer gardens, and Italians the

³*Chicago Tribune*, 3 August, 1923, 10 September, 1931, 26 May, 1932; "Studs Terkel Comments and Presents Prohibition Program," *Studs Terkel Program*, WMFT Radio (Chicago: WMFT, 5 December, 1983).

⁴Study of Prohibition for the National Federation of Settlements," 1926, Chicago Commons Settlement House Papers, Box 24, Folder "Prohibition," Chicago History Museum, Chicago.

trattoria, a form of restaurant that served wine instead of beer or liquor.

German and Irish saloons, particularly those in the downtown area, were more inviting to a varied of patrons than those of newer immigrant groups. Scandinavian, Italian, Polish, and Bohemian saloons tended to attract men among their own nationality. The saloon was less popular among Greek and Jewish residents. Following Prohibition, drinking businesses continued cater to distinct ethnic communities, such as the Irish, the Italians, the Bohemians, or the Poles, that lived nearby them; however, an increasingly number of these places sought out the business of other social groups, particularly as the ethnic character of neighborhoods transformed.⁵

Definitive categories of class, race, ethnicity, or morality in relations to the different drinking venues were not always clear. This blurring of social groups within commercial establishments increased rapidly during the 1920 and early 1930s. A number of them appropriated ethnic or exotic cultures in hopes of creating cosmopolitan environs. Other places catered to specific social or class groups. Some were devoted to the criminals who operated them. Others were for the artistic or intellectual devotee. Many of the larger popular places had a mix of different customers. While larger syndicate-run cabarets and cafes, usually located in the city center and in distant suburbs, exhibited cosmopolitan environments,

⁵Perry R. Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston: 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), Chapter Five; Jane Addams, "A Decade of Prohibition in Chicago," *Survey*, 1 October 1929, 5. Duis argued that Greeks preferred coffee houses and Jews favored cigar stores, soda parlors, and theaters over saloons. However, he also detected a rise in saloon proprietorship amongst Jews after 1900.

smaller speakeasies, often found outside the city center, accommodated men and women from particular ethnic groups.⁶

A number of resorts additionally encouraged novel forms of public interactions between men and women. Females were no longer secluded to back rooms and many arrived at drinking establishments without a male escort. Illegal resorts no longer exhibited a strictly male environs. Some places, however, sought to uphold more traditional gender roles and restrict females.⁷

Doctors, Drugstores, and Fake Storefront Retail Establishments

Speakeasies and other open drinking venues were not always the site of illicit transactions. Dispensers of illegal alcohol who did not sell it for use on their own premises composed a significant portion of the alcohol trade. Off-sale outlets flourished and greatly added to the number of retail establishments. Numerous doctors contributed to these sorts of retail liquor dealers, both legally and illegally providing patients with a loophole to purchase alcohol through prescriptions. Physicians made a profit by unscrupulously supplying patients with orders for liquor. Doctor Anna B. Schultz, for instance, wrote more than three hundred prescriptions a day for whiskey during the influenza epidemic. Federal investigators claimed many of these she issued to patients who did not have the flu.

⁶Lizabeth Cohen argues that Prohibition initially had the effect of increasing ethnocentricity by closing saloons in places like Whiskey Row in Packingtown and eliminating former interethnic contacts in those saloons. See Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 29. Once drinking establishments reappeared, these interethnic encounters increased in frequency within them.

⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 4 February, 1951, 4 December, 1966. Pre-Prohibition gender customers discussed in Madelon Powers, *Faces Along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 27-35.

A jury found Schultz, who also was wanted on charges of “murder by abortion,” guilty.⁸

Druggists thus became one of the primary dispensers of whisky. Drugstore, or pharmacies, functioned both legally, filling prescriptions (which were sometimes forged) and illegally, selling alcohol without prescriptions. They were both large and small businesses. For instance, Lillian Zwick acted as the proprietor of a small drugstore at 6147 South Halsted in the Englewood neighborhood. She served an assortment of liquor to any customers looking for a drink. Many pharmacies became chain stores as the result of their newfound income. The Home Drug Company built four Loop locations to dispense whiskey. They were the largest illicit drugstores in the area. Customers merely had to know who to tell the cashier “who sent them” to purchase a pint of whiskey for seven dollars. The Home Drug Company, however, was not the largest drug store to develop from Prohibition. The movement of cash to pharmacies during the 1920s was also partially responsible for the growth of the chain store Walgreens in Chicago, which dispensed thousands of pints of whiskey (legally and illegally) each day. With this extra capital, Walgreens later developed into the largest national pharmacy chain over the twentieth century.⁹

A number of small businesses supplied liquor for residents in addition to

⁸*Chicago Defender*, 7 February, 1920.

⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 September, 1922; Criminal Case Files, USDC, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Illinois, Case Numbers 7101, 12257, and 12483, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 197.

drugstores. Men and women outside the liquor industry were drawn to the trade. Barbers, grocers, bakers, butchers, fishmongers, tailors, candy-store owners, cigar shop proprietors, and a host of other small business owners became sources of alcohol. These retail businesses functioned in a variety of ways. Many sellers distributed small amounts of liquor directly from their home. Customers did not need to know their dealer in order to obtain it. However the anonymity of the trade was often cause for awkward circumstances. Purchasers at times knocked on the doors of unsuspecting residents looking for booze. One Evanston group of men made the mistake of getting the wrong house, that of a local constable, who proved unsympathetic and notified authorities.¹⁰

To supplement their income, many immigrant families functioned as retail outlets for their neighbors. Often times these businesses operated under the radar of syndicates. These places were widespread and in many communities. For instance, Fred Witt and his seventy-one-year-old wife, who both arrived from Germany at the end of the nineteenth century and had remained in relative penury since their entrance into the country, purchased moonshine from a friend who produced it in his basement. They then sold it to other acquaintances who lived in the Near North Side community. Similarly, Amelia Cook, a married immigrant in her forties, dispensed homebrewed beer from the back door of her house on the far northwest side of the city.¹¹

¹⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 29 January, 1922.

¹¹*Chicago Tribune*, 9 March, 1924.

Residents of a variety of backgrounds dispensed alcohol. Drew Clark, a black southern migrant who lived at 3817 South Indiana Avenue, was another example of retailers who sold alcohol directly from their homes. Clark managed to obtain and distribute moonshine outside syndicated networks into the 1930s. In 1932, a federal agent observed Clark delivering liquor to a neighborhood and approached him to get some. When Clark returned a half hour later, he provided the agent with the alcohol. The officer then pulled out his badge. Clark fired six shots, killing the government official.¹²

Selling alcohol from one's residence allowed for a variety of men and women to participate in the trade. Young boys and girls often found themselves involved. Numerous parents used their children to conceal their activities by having them transport it from one place to another. Further, many entrepreneurs who operated from their homes were living with their parents. For instance, eleven-year-old Patricia Zataut made a few dollars a week providing whiskey to thirsty customers in her neighborhood. She obtained the liquor from her parents' cabinet. While Zataut's activities were not significant in their reach and influence, they do demonstrate the prevalence of the illegal alcohol market in the city. After selling to a man who lived in the area, authorities arrested her and her family. Zataut was not unique but was instead one of thousands of adolescent girls and boys who were attracted to the black market.¹³

¹²*Chicago Tribune*, 11 August, 1932; *Chicago Defender*, 6 August, 1932.

¹³*Chicago Tribune*, 8 March, 1921.

Street Trade and Bellhops

A number of sources functioned as retail outlets for liquor drank off premises. Bellhops, waiters, and elevator operators devised plans to obtain illegal alcohol and sell it. Bellhops, usually young boys and men under twenty-five years old, provided pint glass bottles of whiskey to paying customers. Charging around three dollars for a pint of gin (or some similar concoction) and six dollars for a pint of bourbon, bellhops often collected the money and then took it to a nearby distributor to acquire the product. John J. Reynolds became “the booze baron of bellhops,” according to the *Tribune*, in the first year of Prohibition. After obtaining whiskey through illegal channels, Reynolds distributed suitcases of liquor to hotel bellhops for sale to guests. Reynolds made rounds to numerous hotels, including the luxurious Palmer House and the Great Northern, each day and sold his product for between eight to twelve dollars to the bellhops. Peter Flubus, the head bellhop at the Great Northern Hotel, purchased thousands of dollars in whiskey from Reynolds and then sold it to visitors looking for alcohol.¹⁴

A number of Loop bellhops obtained their liquor from a production plant and distribution center located in the Hartford Building. The operators of the facility, which included more than twenty men and women, cut the alcohol and then packaged the liquor in bottles with fraudulent labels. Taking orders over the

¹⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 18 April, 1920.



Figure 30. Walter Budges, a Street Bootlegger, with Prohibition Agents after Being Arrested (*Chicago Defender*)

telephone, they then delivered it to nearby hotels. According to Prohibition Administrator E. C. Yellowley, the Hartford operation was “the chief oasis of out of town buyers, visiting drummers and other gay transients who put up in the best of the loop hotels.” Another Prohibition agent believed that “there [was] scarcely a hotel in the loop” that didn’t employ from one to twelve bellhops who were in communication with the operation daily. Federal officials infiltrated the facility in

late 1926 and arrested more than a dozen participants.¹⁵

In order to supply out-of-town visitors, a number of small-time retail alcohol sellers operated directly from hotels. For instance, Samuel Simon of the Lawndale neighborhood sold whiskey from a room in the Congress Hotel under the alias J. H. Brown. Working with the Congress' bellhops, who told customers which room they could obtain liquor, Simon solicited the business of guests of the hotel. He stored the alcohol in trucks and then supplied it to customers who came to his room.¹⁶

Alcohol sellers often plied their trade directly from the street in some neighborhoods. On South Parkway Boulevard between 47th and 51st streets, the area that became the newly designated "Stroll" in the Black Belt during the 1920s, bootleggers sold liquor by the bottle and cup. Revelers walking up and down the street, going to the numerous cabarets, "gin joints," and dance halls in the area, purchased cups of moonshine for as little as a nickel. For instance, William Budes, a thirty-five-year-old resident of the area, sold moonshine on the street out of two hot water bottles hidden under his pants (Figure 30). This street market to strangers allowed individuals to enter the trade without much capital or networking.¹⁷

Former Saloons

One of the most prevalent illegal businesses was the traditional saloon.

¹⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 4 December, 1926.

¹⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 6 January, 1927.

¹⁷*Chicago Defender*, 22 February, 1930, 20 August, 1932.

Thousands of saloons continued operating with few women drinking and no displays of “indecenty.” While many of the city’s residents became caught up in the novel cultures and environments associated with criminal intoxication, other revelers clung to traditional modes of social drinking. Many establishments that appeared not much different from pre-Prohibition saloons continued to thrive. While numerous owners maintained a false front for their establishment—such as a restaurant, a soda parlor, or near beer saloon—many of them continued operating their saloons without cover. American-born groups and German and Irish immigrants were the primary patrons of saloons before 1919 and they continued to be so afterwards. Working-class resorts in residential districts, which often catered to men, maintained older patterns of interaction. Many saloons in the 1920s employed a wider range of entertainments for their guests. Even small ones often maintained “cabarets” or dance halls in the rear rooms. These places were usually located in immigrant neighborhoods. The primary feature of the saloon was the centrality of the bar where rituals of male companionship occurred (Figure 31). These conventional saloons were venues where more traditional gender roles and relations between sexes remained more intact than in other speakeasies.¹⁸

Moonshine, Beer, and Wine Flats and Small Speakeasies

Illicit drinking establishments began taking new forms during the 1920s. While many resembled saloons, these venues differed from their predecessors in many ways. They often appeared in places they previously did not exist as many

¹⁸Jane Addams, “A Decade of Prohibition,” 5.



Figure 31. Bar and Tables of a Saloon Disguised as a Coffee Shop on the Near West Side (National Archives, Great Lakes Region)

saloonkeepers and other proprietors searched for new properties. Many exhibited distinct cultures and social customs than those found in the saloon. Beer, moonshine, or wine flats were among the most novel establishments of the era. A flat, in either a commercial building or sometimes a residential unit, could be opened relatively easy. They catered to the clientele of the neighborhood. Such places often managed to escape the influence of powerful criminal leaders. By manufacturing their own alcohol, proprietors of beer flats and small speakeasies often eluded syndicated networks. They seldom paid protection and offered their

goods at cheaper rates due to the money they saved. Because beer flats required little start-up capital, numerous Chicagoans operated them. Any renter of an apartment could apply for a license to sell non-alcoholic beverages, substitute real beer for near beer and make a steady profit. These establishments were usually located outside downtown and were often found in immigrant communities. Women owned and operated a small percentage of these places.¹⁹

The appellation “speakeasy” often applied to a new form of drinking venue that was similar to the saloon but presented a different appearance. Their existence was often not immediately apparent to the average passerby and their entrances were often secluded. Entertainments in these places were kept to a piano or a recorded music device. Drink and the bar where it was served was the main attraction. These speakeasies differed from the saloon in that women were more welcomed.²⁰

Beer flats took several appearances, appearing both on levels of commercial buildings and residences. These businesses provided a more intimate setting and more privacy. As the 1920s progressed, more and more Chicagoans built bars on one of the levels of their two- or three-flat homes, often in their basements. In contrast to saloons, flats were generally accepting of women drinkers. According to

¹⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 June, 1932.

²⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 4 October, 1931.

Mary B. Finan, vice president of the Catholic Abstinence Union of Illinois, ladies preferred not to “go to a bar, while they would go to beer flats.”²¹

An alternate version of the beer flat was the wine flat, which often had an Italian owner and served wine instead of beer. Wine flats were similar to contemporary Italian restaurants except that patrons were assured the waiters brought wine with their food. Wine flats, which were often located near heavily Italian areas, allowed members of other ethnic groups to go to an immigrant group’s neighborhood and identify with their culture. Owners usually opened these businesses right in their homes. Each maintained its own atmosphere and character. Many built reputations throughout the city. Wine resorts like Maria’s, Enrico’s, Rick’s, Joe’s, and Gustavo’s were among these sorts of places. Caruso’s Italian Restaurant was one popular destination. Diners could eat while they drank wine and listened to live Italian music played on the mandolin.

The majority of illegal drinking venues were small, family-run establishments. Husbands, wives, and sometimes children participated. Starting such an open drinking establishment was relatively easy. To set up a small speakeasy, proprietors needed roughly between fifteen hundred and two thousand dollars for start-up capital for basics such as a bar, kitchen appliances, an icebox, decorations, furniture, and washrooms. Proprietors built places of illicit drinking in a variety of commercial and residential properties. They were most likely found away from the street level, usually located up a flight of stairs or in a basement

²¹*Chicago Tribune*, 29 January, 1934.

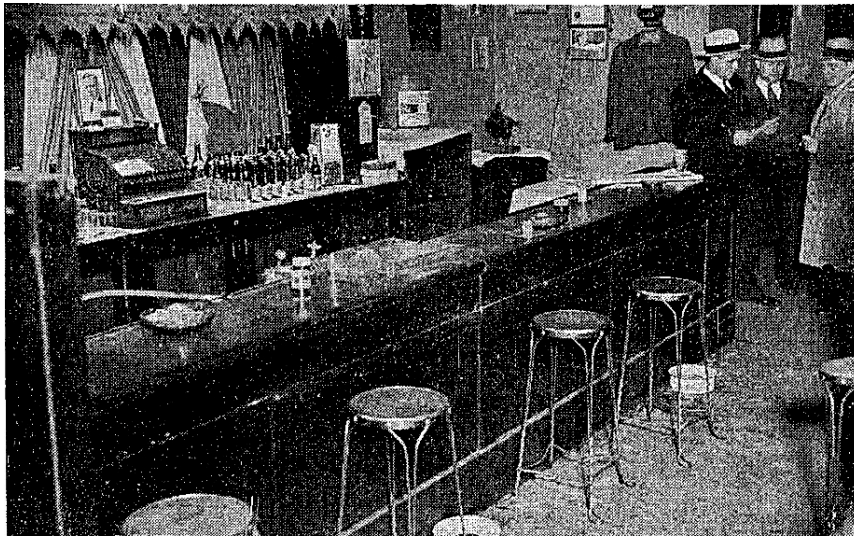


Figure 32. Inside the Basement Speakeasy of Benjamin and Ernest Applequist at 42 North Paulina Avenue (*Chicago Tribune*)

(Figure 32). Retailers frequently were required to pay protection money, which was often included in the price of the beer or liquor, to whatever syndicate controlled the neighborhood where they operated.²²

The Oleszek family provides an example of a standard family-operated small speakeasy. John Oleszek moved to the United States from his birthplace Poland in 1912. Like many immigrants of the day, he soon arrived in Chicago. Shortly thereafter, Oleszek met his wife Frances, conceived two children, and, in 1924, became a naturalized citizen. According to the 1930 census, he worked as a “real estate proprietor.” However, he used other, illegal means to make an income. Following the advent of Prohibition, the couple began selling alcohol from their home at 1450 West Huron Street in the heavily Polish West Town community. They

²²*Chicago Tribune*, 14 November, 1931, 23, April, 3 October 1932.

made moonshine and wine and sold it to men and women who lived in the area.

The two most likely had no connections to the Syndicate. Their proceeds proliferated and they soon purchased a ten thousand dollar two-flat building two doors east where they sold their product away from their home. While functioning as a speakeasy, their illicit retail business looked virtually like a residence. Federal agents began investigating the Oleszek family in 1932. A search of their property turned up bottles of red wine and “colored and uncolored spirits.” After admitting guilt, federal Judge James Wilkerson fined Frances five hundred dollars and John three hundred seventy-five dollars. Unlike many law violators of the time, they simply paid their fines.²³

Hotels and Hotel Bars

Hotels and their associated barrooms were other common sites of alcohol violations. Hotels took many forms, sizes, and catered to different social groups.²⁴ Some hotels were a component of the underground economy. Many served as informal headquarters for the organization of alcohol trade networks. J. Newton Roe, a doctor who was part owner of the New Southern Hotel, used his position to purchase and sell thousands of dollars in whisky. The Lexington, Metropole, and Hawthorne in Cicero provided spaces for meetings and leisure for the Torrio-Capone group. Among the most notorious hotels that sold alcohol was the Rex,

²³Criminal Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois at Chicago, Case Number 18219, Volume 35, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930.

²⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 10 October 1921.

owned by Capone partner Dennis Cooney, who oversaw Capone's prostitution operations on the South Side. The Rex, which also housed a café, continued to stay in business long after other raucous resorts were closed. Following raids on other resorts, Cooney closed the first floor and opened a soda parlor on the second floor where both alcohol and prostitutes were for sale. Others that sold illegal alcohol on their premises at one point included the Randolph, the Sherman, the Morrison, the Auditorium, and the Congress. Many hotels did not sell booze but instead functioned as sites of social gatherings during holidays. Most of the larger hotels ultimately lost fortunes because they were not able to sell alcohol as fragrantly as smaller speakeasies and less conspicuous cabarets.²⁵

Cabarets, Cafes, and Nightclubs

While the loose term "speakeasy" took many forms, contemporary usage of it often applied to cabarets, cafes, and nightclubs. Such establishments, that stressed values of leisure, consumption, and recreation over nineteenth century mores of discipline and restraint, had their roots in the 1890s. During World War I, they became the target of "anti-cabaret" laws. Their popularity only grew over the next decade. Many of these cabarets, cafes, and other large entertainment venues came under the ownership or control of syndicated networks and became prime battle ground in their fight over territory. Their existence was no secret.

²⁵Commissioners' Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Case Number 6593, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 11 July, 27 August, 1920, 6 January, 1927, 25 February, 13 July, 1931, 27 May, 1932.

Cabarets often were opened all hours of the night and provided entertainment—usually music and dance, some form of musical theater, or a comedic performance—until sunrise. Patrons usually came in groups and sat together at tables. Guests were usually relatively wealthy men and women who maintained disposable income, as such establishments were often more expensive. Many required a “cover charge,” a relatively new concept in the history of Chicago drinking. Outside the Black Belt, most of these resorts restricted African American patrons. These types of businesses maintained decorous atmospheres and expected a degree of etiquette—proper dress and manners—from patrons. While many were luxuriously decorated, others presented a more garish appearance. Crepe paper ornamentation was a common sight. Cabarets and other nightclubs were the chief destinations for so-called “sun-dodgers,” seeking socialization and adventure until sunrise. While usually seated at tables, patrons often moved from table to table getting acquainted with other visitors. While couples often came together, men frequently came with a group of men and women arrived with other women, each seeking out potential dancing or dating partners. These larger venues served as the most important arenas where patrons exhibited modern dress, attitudes, and behaviors.²⁶

²⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 24 March, 1918, 10, 11, 12 July, 1922, 4 February, 1951, 4 December, 1966. For analysis of the new urban culture in Chicago see Lewis Erenberg, “Ain’t We Got Fun,” *Chicago History* (Winter 1985-1986), 4-21. For history of cabarets in New York City see Erenberg, *Steppin’ Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).

One of the most legendary cabarets in the city was the Green Mill Café, located by the corner of Lawrence Avenue and Broadway in Uptown. The Green Mill Café, and its outdoor venue—the Green Mill Gardens—remained open violating the law at the beginning Prohibition. Under the ownership of Thomas Chamales, who opened the club in 1914, the nightclub served beer and liquor over the counter in the early 1920s. Chamales, who was one-time owner of the Pekin Inn (one of the city's earliest black and tans in the Black Belt), sold his interest in the Green Mill following a series of raids and a number of entrepreneurs took ownership over the decade. Capone-ally Ted Newberry eventually established himself as the proprietor of the Green Mill. Customers were expected to dress in proper attire—often a tuxedo for men and dresses for women—and exhibit respectable manners. Like many other large drinking establishments, entertainment was center stage at the Green Mill. Musicians, dancers, and comedians, both black and white, performed there. Patrons usually took to the dance floor between acts. Comedian Joe E. Lewis built an immense following after performing at the Green Mill. When Texas Guinan came to Chicago after her arrest in New York for violating the Volstead Act, the Green Mill hired her to formulate an act. However, after Guinan's agent, John Voiler, shot one of the owners, Leon Sweitzer, the club closed its doors. Chamales, who reacquired ownership, then turned the Green Mill into a sports arena where patrons watched

boxing bouts and other events. In 1933, the original building burned to the ground.²⁷

The Rendezvous Café, formerly the Rienze Gardens, was another well-attended resort. Located on the border between the Lincoln Park and Lakeview communities at the intersection of Broadway, Clark Street, and Diversey Parkway, the Rendezvous became one of the most popular cabarets on the North Side. Like other cabarets and cafes, the Rendezvous was elaborately decorated. In 1923, the owners spent over \$100,000 to built a “Japanese Room.” The Rendezvous, owned by Sam Rothschild and George Leiderman, came under of the control of the criminal organization headed by Dean O’Bannion; it was one of their largest establishments. Leiderman worked to present some of the most popular revues in the city, which included performers such as Sophie Tucker and Ted Lewis.²⁸

The Rainbo Gardens, operated by German immigrant Fred Mann, was among the most popular resorts on the North Side. Mann, a friend and supporter of Mayor Bill Thompson who began his career as a waiter in the Green Mill, opened the Rainbo in 1917. Most all forms of entertainment—music, dancing, and food—were available. The Rainbo served a variety of cuisines, including a spaghetti special, for

²⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 24 September, 1919, 22 July, 1922, 9 November, 1927, 31 December, 1931, 27 April, 1933. Chamales later rebuilt the Green Mill in the 1930s.

²⁸Comedian Joe Lewis transferred his act to the Rendezvous in 1927. Soon after, an intruder entered his apartment and stabbed him repeatedly in the face and throat. While Lewis survived the attack, it left him scarred and with a mangled voice. Lewis did not relent but instead eventually attained part ownership of the Rendezvous. After his attack, Lewis believed Capone gunner Vinnie DeMora (alias Jack McGurn) was the attacker, as he thought DeMora was angered because he was part owner of the Green Mill. Rendezvous and Lewis attack discussed in *Chicago Tribune*, 9 November, 8 December, 1920, 9 December, 1923, 9 February, 1928; *Variety*, 6 October,, 1926.

MENU	
Rainbo Specials	
Famous \$2.00 Dinner	
Served Daily from 5 to 10 p. m.	
Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays \$2.50	
SPAGHETTI RAINBO 85	
Mann's Special Spaghetti 1.50	
(Prepared on Your Table (Service for Two 2.00))	
RAINBO CHICKEN CHOW MEIN 1.50	
Ragout Fin, Chef's Special 1.25	
Fresh Beluga Caviar, Melba Toast 2.50	
Stuffed Clams, a la Mann 1.00	
Rainbo Sandwich, au Gratin, Hot 1.00	
Caviar and Chicken Combination Sandwich 1.25	
Scallops and Fresh Shrimps, Poulette 1.25	
Devised Crab, Remoulade 1.00	
Sweetbreads and Fresh Mushrooms, Eugenie 2.00	
Whole Broiled Live Lobster 2.00	
Fresh Crab Flakes with Green Peppers au Gratin 1.50	
Chicken Livers, Lamb Kidneys Brochette, Diablo 1.25	
Shredded Chicken, Creole with Rice 1.75	
Emince of Chicken and Fresh Mushrooms, Tetrastini 1.75	
Minute Sirloin Steak with Potatoes 1.50	
Filet Mignon with Fresh Mushrooms 2.25	
Ragout of Beef Tenderloin, a la Deutsch 1.50	
Supreme of Guinea Hen, Club Style 2.00	
Breast of Chicken a la Rainbo 2.00	
Welsh Rarebit 85	
Chicken Chili Con Carne 1.00	
Smoked Sturgeon 1.25	
Virginia Ham and Sliced Chicken 1.75	
FRESH FISH AND SEA FOOD RECEIVED DAILY	
Single Orders Served for Two Persons, 25 Cents Extra	
Not Responsible for Wearing Apparel or Personal Property Unless Checked	
REFRESHMENTS LISTED ON OPPOSITE PAGE	
A LA CARTE MENU ON PAGE 10	
For Special Dishes Not on This Bill of Fare, Consult	
SUPERINTENDENT OF SERVICE	
Guests Are Kindly Requested to Pay Waiter	
ONLY UPON PRESENTATION OF PRINTED CHECK	
8	
REFRESHMENTS	
Champblanc Sparkling Extra Dry	2.50-4.00
Theo. Nett, Sparkling Champagne Type Grape Juice	2.50-4.00
Martini & Rossi Sparkling Vermouth	3.00
PITCHER DRINKS	
Rainbo, Cup	2.50-4.00
Loganberry, Cup	2.50-4.00
Orange Crush	2.50-4.00
Raspberry Crush	2.50-4.00
FIZZES AND RICKEYS	
Silver Fizz	75
Rainbo Fizz	75
Golden Fizz	75
Sloe Gin Fizz	75
Lime Fizz	75
Sloe Gin Rickey	75
Grape Juice Rickey	75
Loganberry Rickey	75
Grenadine Rickey	75
Raspberry Rickey	75
Apricot Rickey	75
Pineapple Rickey	75
HIGHBALLS	
Grape Juice	75
Loganberry	75
Grenadine	75
Raspberry	75
Apricot	75
Pineapple	75
Crème de Menthe	75
Crème de Cocoa	75
Crème de Violet	75
MIXED DRINKS	
Rainbo Cooler	75
Rainbo Punch	75
Grape Juice	75
Grape Juice Punch	75
Loganberry Punch	75
Grenadine Punch	75
Grenadine Cocktail	75
Raspberry Cocktail	75
Pineapple Cocktail	75
Hawaiian Cocktail	75
Fruit Cocktail	75
Eggnog	75
Milk Shake	75
Horse's Neck	1.00
Black Cow	1.00
BEER IN BOTTLES	
NATIONAL BREW'G BUCK 60	75
Edelweiss	75
Malt Tonic	75
WATER, GINGER ALE, ETC.	
White Rock	1.00
Apollinaris	1.00
Baker's Water	1.00
Poland Water	1.00
French Vichy	1.00
RAINBO GINGER ALE	
INDIAN HILL DRY	1.00
MORAND EXTRA PALE	1.00
HADDON HALL DRY	1.00
Country Club	1.00
C & G Ginger Ale	1.00
Canada Dry	1.25
Lemon Soda	1.00
Sarsaparilla Imported	75
Grape Fruit Juice (Glass)	75
Orange Juice (Glass)	75
Lime Juice (Glass)	75
CORDIALS	
Apricot	75
Cherry	75
Port	75
LEMONADES	
Plain	60
Fruit	75
Seltzer	75
Loganberry	75
Grape Juice	75
Raspberry	75
Pineapple	75
Orange Crush	75
Grenadine	75
Orangeade	75
Limeade	75
SUNDAES	
Crushed Fruit	75
Grenadine	75
Raspberry	75
Crème de Menthe	75
Strawberry	75
Pineapple	75
Ice per Bowl - 50	
A La Carte Menu on Next Page	
9	

Figure 33. First Page of Food and Drink Menu from the Rainbo Gardens in Uptown (Chicago Public Library)

patrons seeking something outside their daily cooking (Figure 33). In its early years, the Rainbo sold illegal alcohol to customers; however, after federal charges, customers had to bring their own. Mann redecorated the Rainbo, which accommodated around 3,000 guests, in the early 1920s with a Renaissance style. While its name was meant to evoke a cosmopolitan theme, like many of its fellow resorts, the Rainbo served only white guests. Patron conduct at the Rainbo was relatively tame and mannerly compared to other resorts. Among the staple performers at the Rainbo was long-time cabaret performer Kitty Gordon, who sang songs, danced, and told jokes. Musicians there played a diluted and refined version

of the jazz found in the Black Belt. Patrons additionally bet on games of jai alai in the back room. Although the Rainbo strived to maintain decorum, fights and shootings were not unknown. The Rainbo was one of a dozen nightclubs Prohibition Bureau agents targeted to close due to evidence of patrons drinking hip liquor. Despite Mayor Thompson's pleas to officials in Washington D. C., federal agents won an injunction suit padlocking the Rainbo in 1928. In the fall of 1930, Mann committed suicide.²⁹

Most cabarets and cafés, no matter their location or policies, exhibited foreign themes. For instance, German immigrant Samuel Wolfe operated the Bagdad Inn at 6400 South Cottage Grove Avenue. The club maintained a Middle Eastern décor but employed jazz musicians to entertain the guests. Other clubs had French themes, such as the famous Chez Pierre, owned by John Raklios, on the Near North Side at 247 East Ontario Avenue. As other foreign-themed establishments, the Chez Pierre preferred jazz music for guests. Similarly, the Club Stamboul (short for Istanbul) maintained Turkish surrounding and appealed to non-Turkish immigrants.³⁰

Many proprietors labeled their establishments a club, which often took many guises. Many clubs resembled cabarets or cafés. The "key club" was a particular

²⁹Commissioners' Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Case Number 6500, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 19 August, 1921, 6 February, 1928, 9 October, 1930, 13 July, 1932; William Howland Kenney, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 80.

³⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 26 September, 1931.

resort that was more exclusive, requiring a key for entrance. Harry Heyman, a Hyde Park resident, carried on such a business in a fifth floor office of a Loop skyscraper at 40 North Wells Street. He built a bar that folded down for hiding and sold a large quantity of booze from it before Prohibition agents arrested him in 1924.³¹

Large drinking establishments required a number of employees. Owners hired bartenders, waiters, and entertainers, most likely a piano player. Fancier establishments had a hostess or checkroom girl who worked for tips. Checkroom girls were not only responsible for checking coats and hats but also for getting male customers in a flirtatious mood. These women often became romantically involved with the men they associated with at work. This often led to awkward movements and sometimes tension. For instance, Vallene Urlick, an entertainer at Colosimo's, ended up shot in the foot after she tried dating two men at the same time while working. Most female hostesses and check girls, however, did not become too intimate with male patrons. Men were eager to act the part of the wealthy spender and willingly played along with the women employees.³²

Many places that attempted to remain exclusive hired doormen to greet guests. Most of these larger speakeasies additionally maintained cooks, as most were guised as restaurants. Bartenders and waiters, who were often black men, were the primary means to get alcohol in the hands of customers. These types of

³¹*Chicago Tribune*, 2 April, 1924.

³²*Chicago Tribune*, 3 October 1932.

jobs were relatively profitable, plentiful, and provided an opportunity for men to climb the ranks of a criminal network. These employees suffered the great burden of being arrested, as they were the most susceptible to raids.³³

Black and Tans

Black proprietors of leisure venues provided a source of pride of the African American community in Chicago. The number of black saloonkeepers had steadily increased before 1919. These were in fact the only drinking venues where black residents were welcomed, despite a state civil rights law designed to prevent discrimination in accommodations. After Prohibition, African Americans found it increasingly difficult to enter the trade. Those that did stay in business found that the need to serve to white patrons was more necessary. While ambiguous about attracting white patrons, they were often forced to because they had more discretionary income than black residents.³⁴

The “black and tan” was the primary drinking institution in the Black Belt. The appellation “black and tan” applied to a number of disparate places. Most black and tans differed in their patrons and ownership background, while maintaining a similar atmosphere as cabarets and other nightclubs. While white businessmen owned a number of these resorts, African American proprietors operated a number of them. By the early 1930s, fewer black proprietors owned them.

Black and tans and other resorts in the Black Belt functioned also as the

³³*Chicago Tribune*, 3 October 1932.

³⁴Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 157-160; Kenney, *Chicago Jazz*, 6, 17-19.

center “sporting life” in Chicago. Numerous athletes haunted the area in search of leisure and were personally known by residents. Black and tans also provided the cultural milieu for the development of jazz in the city. They served as centers of socialization and community in Bronzeville. Many black and tans maintained themes of southern culture, most notably the Plantation Café, the Dixie Inn, and the Cotton Club. The Plantation Café at 336 East 35th Street was the best example of this southern nostalgia. Joseph Glazer operated the café under the protection of the Torrio syndicate.³⁵

The most famous black cabaret owner in Chicago was William Bottoms, who operated the Dreamland Café at the corner of 35th and South State Street. Interracial dancing and interaction were common. The Dreamland provided a stage for many early jazz musicians, including Louis Armstrong and Joe Oliver. Bottoms strived to maintain decorum at the Dreamland. Local and federal enforcement officials, however, charged Bottoms and his employees numerous times with selling alcohol. An injunction suit temporarily closed the Dreamland in 1924 after a dramatic raid involving pugilist Jack Johnson. Johnson confronted agents and protested the raid. “Look here, Mr. Uncle Sam, there won’t be any fireworks [camera flashes] around here, even if we decide to let you put on the locks,” Johnson told two agents as they entered the place. Bottoms briefly returned to operate the Dreamland after its reopening; however, pressures from criminal organizations and enforcement agents caused him to retire from the business in the mid-1920s. A new group of white

³⁵Kenney, *Chicago Jazz*, Chapters One and Two.

proprietors purchased the building and continued running it as La Rue's Dreamland Café.³⁶

The Lorraine Gardens was among the most popular African American-owned true black and tans. A center for music, dance, and drinking, the Lorraine was the constant target of reformers and enforcement officials. The Lorraine was more secretive than many places and had a side entrance with a hallway that led to the main room. Here an eclectic mix of patrons met visitors: slumming parties, prostitutes, pimps, and middle-class couples. Unlike many establishments, the Lorraine set no rules regarding interracial interactions. White women danced with black men and black women danced with white men. Walter Ball, former dance manager of the Pekin Inn, one of Chicago's first black and tans located at 27th and State Streets, was the proprietor of the Lorraine.³⁷ "Packey" McFarland, who took his name after the famous Irish prizefighter, was another black proprietor. McFarland owned the Pioneer Club 3512 South State Street. He purchased his product from the Spike O'Donnell of the South Side O'Donnell gang. Entrepreneurs such as Bottoms and McFarland became rarer as the 1920s progressed.³⁸

³⁶*Chicago Defender*, 12 June, 1924, *Chicago Tribune*, 21 September, 1924; Commissioner's Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Chicago, Case Numbers 9451 and 9452, National Archives and Records Administration, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois.

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 16 September, 1921; JPA Papers, Folder 93.

³⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 2 September, 1920, 20 May, 1924.

Some black-owned liquor-selling places in the Black Belt strictly served African American residents. Dan Jackson, one-time owner of the Jackson Funeral Home, ran numerous such establishments, including a popular one at the corner of 35th Street and South State Street next to the Dreamland Café. Jackson's business functioned primarily as a gambling hall for black Chicagoans but also served drinks. Despite being arrested by federal agents once for selling alcohol, he was able to continue his activities due to his political influence in the city. Jackson headed William Thompson's 1927 bid to reclaim the mayor's seat from William Dever.³⁹

White proprietors owned a number of black and tans and other entertainment businesses in the Black Belt. Al Tearney operated a few of such businesses. Tearney's most popular cabaret was the Auto Inn at the corner of East 35th Street and Calumet Avenue, which opened during the 1910s. While called a black and tan because it was located in the Black Belt, the Auto Inn did not allow black residents to visit. It was an all-white establishment. Despite complaints from church and prohibitionist leaders, Tearney's connections to politicians and his payment of large sums of graft kept the place open, even after Mayor Dever closed most other black and tans in the neighborhood. He obtained an injunction from local police that forbade authorities from interfering with his business. Both nightly slumming parties and labor leaders frequented the Auto Inn. The cabaret was the

³⁹Commissioners' Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, Chicago, Volume 98, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; Nathan Thompson, *Kings: The True Story of Chicago's Policy Kings and Numbers Racketeers: An Informal History* (Chicago: The Bronzeville Press, 2003), 32-39.

site of much violence and shootings, making it the target of many reformers.⁴⁰

Elite Speakeasies and Clubs

While some illegal drinking establishments furnished alcohol to an array of residents, a number places served exclusively to an elite clientele. The majority of these places were located in the Loop district. For instance, Louis Weiss operated a speakeasy in the basement of 114 North Dearborn Street, which the *Tribune* referred to as “Chicago’s most pretentious speakeasy” (Figure 34). A cigar store provided a front for Weiss’ drinking establishment. As customers continued to the next room, they met a fifty-square-foot room with a fifty-foot mahogany bar, a dance



Figure 34. Bar of Louis Weiss’ Elite Speakeasy at 114 North Dearborn Street (*Chicago Tribune*)

⁴⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 17 May, 1923.

floor, and a counter offering free meals. Here customers drank the highest quality available whiskeys, brandies, gins, and scotch.⁴¹

More exclusive clubs were social and fraternal groups that continued to use alcohol in their activities during the era. Organizations such as the Chicago Athletic Club allowed members to store liquor in their lockers for use at functions. The most representative example of these high-class venues was in the Chicago Board of Trade building on South La Salle Street, which maintained a speakeasy. The establishment catered to the financial community. Traders visited the place for lunch and after a day of business. The speakeasy served a wide array of liquor, but



Figure 35. Lockers with Liquor in Them at Swedish Club of Chicago (*Chicago Tribune*)

⁴¹*Chicago Tribune*, 3, 4 October, 1931.



Figure 36. Cabinet with Liquor at the Swedish Club of Chicago (*Chicago Tribune*)

the “stinger” was the favored drink. Following the stock market crash in 1929, the place became less crowded.⁴²

The Swedish Club of Chicago was another example of a high-end establishment where distinguished guests drank illicit alcohol (Figures 35 and 36). Located at 1258 North La Salle Street, the club both owned its own alcohol and, like many exclusive clubs, allowed members to stock alcohol in their own lockers. The Swedish Club housed almost two hundred thousand dollars in expensive liquors and wines. The club included many governmental leaders of Swedish descent. Pilot Charles Lindbergh was an honorary members of the club and United States Attorney George E. Q. Johnson, State’s Attorney John Swanson, state Attorney General Oscar Carlstrom, and Mayor Anton Cermak all held regular membership. A number of

⁴²*Chicago Tribune*, 4 December, 1966.

members of both the Illinois and United States Congress, as well as governors, visited the establishment for entertainment as well. Not all, however, drank.⁴³

Many exclusive venues provided gambling services to their customers. Ben Marden ran the Continental Gold Coast Club at 19 East Cedar Street, located in the affluent Gold Coast area of the Near North Side. Marden's business served the "sporting elite of the city." High-rolling gamblers patronized the Gold Coast Club to play roulette, poker, and slot machines while drinking quality liquors and wines. The club was one of many in the neighborhood that catered to the nearby wealthy residents. In the early 1930s, Marden was forced to shut the club down due to his excessive personal gambling that landed him eighteen thousand dollars in debt.⁴⁴

Restaurants

Restaurants were major sites of communal drinking. While cabarets, clubs, hotels, beer and wine flats, and other forms of speakeasies often doubled as eating establishments, some merely sold meals. Serving food provided the perfect cover for operating an illegal business. Speakeasies served some of the best meals in the city. Most illegal alcohol providers actually served some sort of food for their guests. By the late 1920s, many smaller flats and other speakeasies in working-class neighborhoods started resurrecting the pre-Prohibition tradition of providing free or discounted items to customers who purchased a drink. Typical items on the menu included roast beef, stew, fried fish, and corned beef and cabbage. This

⁴³*Chicago Tribune*, 26 June, 1932.

⁴⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 28 October, 1931.

business strategy angered both local syndicate distribution leaders, who seldom supplied these small establishments, and law-abiding restaurant-owners, who protested the loss of business to unlawful proprietors.⁴⁵

Cuisine was an important aspect of most illegal-drinking places and the food represented the affinity for culinary cosmopolitanism. Many of the establishments served food from foreign countries. Italian, Chinese, and Greek fare all became more popular as accompaniments to illicit wine, beer, and liquor. Italian immigrants established the *trattoria* that served native food and wine. Many foreign-born businessmen catered to American-born patrons. For instance, Greek immigrant Louis Choromokos operated the Athenia Café outside in Greektown at 1521 North Clark Street in the Near North Side community. The target customers for the café were not Greek immigrants but the multiple native-born, Irish, and German residents who lived in the area. The Athenia Café served an assortment of alcohol to its customers. Often times, proprietors took advantage of a certain culture's cuisine even if they were of a different background. For example, many non-Chinese owners appropriated Asian cuisine, most often chop suey.⁴⁶

Gambling Joints

Gambling and sports were other realms that many associated with the culture of drinking. Slot machines, card games, and roulette wheels all provided

⁴⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 10 June, 1932; "Studs Terkel Comments and Presents Prohibition Program," *Studs Terkel Program*, WMFT Radio (Chicago: WMFT, 5 December, 1983).

⁴⁶Criminal Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Case Number 7300, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois.

diversions for drinking patrons and were often the main source of revelry.

Horse and dog racing was a major event on which to bet. Many illicit drinking establishments took wagers for the tracks, as well as for an array of sporting events. Bookmakers haunted many speakeasies in hopes of attracting new clients with whom to gamble. Early forms of the casino—most of which dispensed illicit alcohol—thrived. The Villa Maurice in Greektown was one of many such examples. Frank, or “West Side Frankie,” Pope, his cousin Fred Pope, and his brother Willie operated the Villa Maurice. Pope, a bookmaker based in the South Halsted Street area, sold both alcohol and opium to customers who, in a state of intoxication, parted from their money easier while playing roulette, dice, or cards. While convicted in the federal court of violating both the Harrison Act and the National Prohibition Act, his extra income allowed for him to expand and open a second location next to the Rendezvous Café on the North Side.⁴⁷

Brothels and Other Venues for Commercial Sex

Some places of illegal drinking also functioned as centers of prostitution and other forms of commercial sex. While many drinkers were merely looking to converse with friends and other patrons, others were looking for more. Basic desires were the main attraction for many customers. The number of houses of prostitution continued to decrease over the 1920s but they did not disappear. The city center continued to house numerous places for the selling of sex. “Houses of ill repute” thrived on North Clark Street, West Madison Street, and South State Street.

⁴⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 23 November, 1929, 3 January, 1930, 6 June, 19, 10 October, 1931, 20 May, 1932.

However, the Black Belt south of downtown developed into the primary red light district. Additionally, the Far South Side, in addition to industrial suburbs, became another new area for commercial sex. Delia Callahan operated a typical house of prostitution in the city's South Chicago community. Callahan, an immigrant from Ireland born in 1882, turned to commercial sex after her husband died. She served whiskey to visitors at fifty cents a shot from a bar in her brothel at 9300 South Commercial Avenue.⁴⁸

In order to escape enforcement, pimps, prostitutes, and other businesspeople across the city found new ways in which to commercialize sexuality and sell it to patrons along with an illegal drink. Many middle-class revelers sought out these activities as an escape from the confines of gentility. A number of illegal drinking places employed women to converse with unaccompanied men and get them to buy them drinks. Many saloons began allowing prostitutes to use their rear rooms to solicit men to take back to a hotel or apartment complex. In the Black Belt, prostitutes openly sought out customers, yelling solicitations to men passing by. Consequently, many illegal-drinking places exhibited an atmosphere of overt sexual undertones and portrayed images of excitement (or repulsion) to potential patrons and passersby.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Committee of Fifteen Research Data, Volumes 18 to 26, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Juvenile Protective Association Papers, Box 6, Folder 108; Commissioners' Docket, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois at Chicago, Case Number 5700, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois.

⁴⁹"Monthly Report, January 1923," Papers of the Juvenile Protective Association, Box 6, Folders 92 and 108, Richard J. Daley Library Special Collections, University of Illinois in Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Reports of the Committee of Fifteen, Volumes 18 to 26, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

Pool Halls

Besides dancing, gambling, and commercialized sex, pool playing became a common form of leisure during the turn-of-the-century. After 1919, poolrooms became ever greater in number and relied more heavily on the sale of alcohol. While the largest concentration of poolrooms was in the Black Belt, they proliferated across the city in the 1920s. As more criminal elements owned and operated poolrooms, they became more affiliated with gambling. The State Poolroom at 653 South State Street, run by Sam Severino, was one of many examples of pool halls turning to illicit liquor. The State was among the largest poolrooms in the city. Severino sold liquor by the glass to his customers.⁵⁰

Residences

Many drinking establishments were located within residential buildings. These places offered similar experiences to speakeasies but were less expensive and more informal. Proprietors often both manufactured and sold alcohol to customers within their homes or rooming houses, with production occurring most often in the basement. Examples are abundant. Robert Sayre and his wife, Ella, ran a beer flat of sorts from the rooming house they owned at 3828 South Ellis Avenue. William E. Smith, a roomer, assisted the couple by finding customers. Smith found a substantial number of his patrons in the Public Service Hospital at the corner of East 47th Street and South Drexel Boulevard. Adolph Sagel, an Austrian immigrant living

⁵⁰Commissioners' Dockets, United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division at Chicago, Volume 33, Case Number 3304, National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois.

in the Albany Park community on the northwest side of the city, was another example of residents utilizing their homes as illicit businesses. He used his basement apartment as a speakeasy. Sagel, a sheet metal worker before Prohibition, brewed his own beer and served it to neighbors who tossed coins into a slot machine while they drank.⁵¹

The home began functioning as a new site for social gatherings and the communal consumption of alcohol, even if the owner was not selling it to guests. Bringing guests into the home to drink was a way of minimizing the chance of encountering enforcement officers. The “house party” was born. One type was the “rent party,” which developed into a method to both gather needed funds and for socialization. Such get-togethers were common in the Black Belt where rent costs were often seventy-five to a hundred percent of what residents made. Apartment complexes, such as the Mecca Building at 33rd and State Streets, became known as “poor man’s cabarets” where attendees ate, drank, and danced. Gatherings were not confined to apartments but spilled out to a public atria area. Hosts purchased jugs of moonshine and sold it at a marked-up price to guests to gain profit. Pianists in the neighborhood built reputations and often developed into local celebrities playing there. The tune “Mecca Flat Blues,” that pianist James Blythe and singer Priscilla Stewart recorded in 1924, originated from the Mecca.⁵²

⁵¹*Chicago Tribune*, 5 March, 1922, 11 August, 1932.

⁵²Dempsey Travis, *An Auto Biography of Black Jazz* (Chicago: Urban Research Institute, 1983), 51-58; Daniel Bluestone offers an architectural examination of the Mecca and other similar apartment buildings in “Chicago’s Mecca Flat Blues,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57 (December 1998), 382-403.

Non-Alcohol-Selling Venues

Many retailers merely served “set-ups,” such as ginger ale, carbonated water, and ice, to mix with liquor. Hip flasks became a popular gift and were often seen in merchants’ store windows. In the early years of Prohibition, federal agents allowed this arrangement. Large cabarets such as the Moulin Rouge and the Friar’s Inn often used this method to keep patrons attending. However, in 1927, after injunction suits in Chicago padlocked the Moulin Rouge and the Friar’s Inn for the mere observation of guests drinking hip liquor, these rules changed. The Supreme Court of the United States refused to hear the case and “hip liquor” became cause to padlock a business.⁵³

The Dill Pickle Club

The Dill Pickle Club was representative of places that allowed but did not serve alcohol. While owner Jack A. Jones was cautious enough not to sell alcohol on his premises, like many club and cabaret owners, he allowed his patrons to drink their own liquor. To make an income, Jones sold ginger ale. Many commentators remembered booze being an integral component of the Pickle. Political editor for the *Chicago Tribune* in the 1960s, George Tagge, recalled taking moonshine gin and joints of marijuana to the club every Saturday night as a teenager in the 1920s. Throughout all activities at the Dill Pickle Club and other “bohemian joints,” the atmosphere encouraged what Ben Reitman called “co-operative drinking.” “The Dill gave men souls and taught the joy of love and the beauty of co-operative drinking,”

⁵³*Chicago Tribune*, 18 October, 1927.

he recollected in the 1930s. Participants passed their beverages around to make sure that the spirits filled the room and everyone enjoyed the experience. The group held frequent publicized events, of which dancing was a primary activity. Whatever musicians happened to be present formed the “orchestra.” Patrons moved their bodies to jazz and other new forms of music while sipping alcohol. The drinking of patrons got Jones in trouble with authorities on numerous occasions. Being investigated by the Prohibition agents in the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision regarding hip liquor in 1927, Jones urged attendees not to bring their own beverages anymore.⁵⁴

In its early years in the 1910s, the club functioned as a headquarters for members of the International Workers of the World and a haven for socialists, communists, anarchists, and other radicals. The Dill Pickle also attracted some of the most famous authors, artists, and thinkers of the era, such as writer Ben Hecht, poet Carl Sandburg, author Floyd Dell, sociologist Ernest Burgess, and attorney Clarence Darrow. Sandburg often provided entertainment with his banjo. Polish sculptor and painter Stanaslav Suzluski came to the club when visiting Chicago. James Coxey of “Coxey’s Army” showed up on occasion as well. Labor leaders and cultural figures drank and ate together and became acquainted. Urging people to “slow down,” the Dill Pickle was resistant to contemporary capitalist society and its values. They set aside special nights of the week for lectures and conversation, of which intoxication was a large part. The group also had debate nights. "Leaving

⁵⁴“Financial Report, August 4, 1925 to October 4, 1925,” Dill Pickle Collection, Newberry Library; *Chicago Tribune*, 30 December, 1932.

your dignity at the door" was not just a matter of shedding ones traditional values. Members took pride in verbally assaulting each other. The audience greeted all lecturers not with applause but instead with heckling, laughter, and insults. This practice allowed speakers to test their ideas against all assaults. The spot also became a hangout for students from the University of Chicago and Northwestern to compare their own budding ideas about life and society against local eccentric thinkers.⁵⁵

The Dill Pickle most clearly represented many of the cosmopolitan themes of the era. The anarchist doctor Ben Reitman, who was a staple there, claimed that the "greatness of the Club lay in the fact that it effected a synthesis, a coming together, a great, comradely, joyous, free fusing in friendship and understanding of the imaginative and daring souls in every walk of Chicago life." Businessmen, artists, writers, professors, prostitutes, hobos, and thieves from a variety of backgrounds comingled at the club. The Pickle welcomed not only men from all ranks of society but women as well. Ladies were a noted presence. They additionally promoted an open toleration of different classes, races, ethnicities, and religions. According to those who attended it, both "high lowbrows and low highbrows" visited. Businessmen were found conversing with the poor. Former black pugilist Jack Johnson made frequent visits, although ordinary, non-celebrity African American attendees were seldom. The mix of people at the Dill Pickle resulted in a unique atmosphere. Many visitors noticed the "Turkish" dress of many of the patrons.

⁵⁵*Chicago Times*, 29 August, 1924, found in Dill Pickle Collection, Newberry Library. Box 1, Folder 28.

Attendees expressed an interest in new topics and religions. Subjects of curiosity included Asian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Yoga philosophy teachers lectured frequently. The club offered a place for both disheartened black and Jewish Chicagoans to criticize their treatment and denounce the development of the KKK in the city. Revelers from all neighborhoods and districts gathered to drink, talk, eat, and dance at the Dill Pickle in hopes of creating a new culture.⁵⁶

The Dill Pickle Club also had affiliations with the city's underworld. Overall, the club maintained a sense of humor about crime. In 1927, Jones and his friends formulated a mock campaign to elect Al Capone mayor of Chicago. Pickle patrons also maintained connections with members of the black market. Lawbreakers were frequent visitors. "Hoodlums," such as Edward "Spike" O'Donnell, leader of the South Side O'Donnell gang, conversed with politicians and intellectuals at the Dill Pickle. Perhaps the most famous criminal to haunt the Pickle was Joe, "Yellow Kid," Weil, a former con man. The club, however, often had problems with criminal figures' "uncouth" behavior. When Jones became intolerant of improper manners after they scared away business, he used the force of his own underworld connections to keep them away. Criminal leaders, however, eventually helped to put an end to the Dill. According to Reitman, "Italian hoodlums" tried to "horn in." They wanted to sell their alcohol there and employ their men as waiters. Jones refused and he soon faced city inspectors who eventually closed down the building.

⁵⁶Dill Pickle Collection, Newberry Library, Box 1, Folder 10.

Reitman deduced that “they [racketeers] killed one of Chicago’s great and famous institutions rather than see it run outside the economic sphere of the underworld.”⁵⁷

Ethnicity, Gender, and Illegal Retail Establishments

An array of retail illegal alcohol outlets served the Chicagoland region, providing employment for tens of thousands of men and women. The distinctions between classes, ethnicities, and races in the city contributed to the differences in retail venues. Each was not merely a site of illegal drinking but also a place in which patrons expressed their background, preferences, tastes, and status. Elite and high-priced clubs remained inaccessible to those residents without the financial ability or social connections to attend them. Many venues were off limits to African Americans. While some resorts reaffirmed ethnic, racial, or class distinctions, a number of resorts blurred social differences, creating newfound spaces of cultural and social integration. The budding ethos of cosmopolitanism was most clearly expressed in these open illegal establishments. This trope was found in speakeasies’ foreign themes and the actual meeting of patrons from different backgrounds within their confines.

Moreover, the proliferation of gathering places for the drinking of illegal alcohol was tied to the development of new gender roles. New ideas concerning femininity transformed women’s relation to alcohol. Drinking was long intertwined with notions of womanliness and remained so during Prohibition, albeit in a

⁵⁷Dill Pickle Club Collection, Newberry Library, Box 5, Folder 29.

different way. Women abstained in order to demonstrate their femininity during the nineteenth century. The prevalence of this thought increasingly lost support. Seen in characters such as the flapper, females retained a sense of respectability while drinking within their social groups. Women hence attended commercial alcohol outlets at an increasing rate. Unlike saloons, speakeasies exhibited a “co-ed” existence. Unescorted women became a more common sight during Prohibition. The presence of females provided a novel excitement to the drinking experience. Men increasingly visited drinking places not for male companionship, forging political connections, or to purchase the services of prostitute but instead to find a potential dating or marriage partner. While women attended the German beer garden and some saloons before 1919, men, namely their spouses, always accompanied them. This augmented attendance of females into the realm of public drinking resulted in illegal resorts changing atmosphere. Speakeasies maintained a more decorous appearance, less nude paintings, and more entertainment than male-dominated saloons. This mass entrance of women into places of intoxication was cause for concern. Pauline Sabin, head of the Women’s Organization for Prohibition Reform, cited the development of the “co-ed” speakeasy as a primary reason to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment.⁵⁸

The development of the flapper was inherently tied to these entertainment settings. Girls and young women who subscribed to the flapper image viewed

⁵⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 27 January, 1930; Duis, *The Saloon*, 153-154; “Studs Terkel Comments and Presents Prohibition Program,” *Studs Terkel Program*, WMFT Radio (Chicago: WMFT, 5 December, 1983).

themselves as cultural innovators. Prohibitionists were their chief antagonists.

For instance, a group of young women who organized the “Royal Order of Flappers” with a slogan of “Down with Reformers” in 1922 sought to abolish the notion of females as dries and overly moralistic. Among flappers’ concerns was the ability to smoke and drink in public. The cabaret and café provided a stage in which these women exhibited their controversial behaviors and fashions. As the repeal movement advanced, a number of these women became politicized for the first time in their participation in it.⁵⁹

The rise of the flapper, however, was not a uniform form of womanliness. Instead, there were many types of women drinkers. A number of various stereotypes arose as woman increasingly entered the world of nightlife. Affluent “debutantes” searched out the most expensive and lavish speakeasies, where they presented themselves in the latest fashions and imagined themselves to be among society’s elite. Wealthy “playgirls,” who were anything but girls and were often older widows, searched out sexual encounters and entertainment at the most exotically decorated places. Many contemporary commentators noticed a new confrontational and brazenness in some female drinkers and branded these women as quarrelsome types. Other female drinkers appeared as innocent and refused to play the role of the brash flapper. Despite their eagerness for alcohol, these “Old Fashion Girls” dressed and acted more in line with nineteenth century gender

⁵⁹*Tribune*, 15 April, 1922.

models. "Working girls" attended the more inexpensive speakeasies. They came in groups, always finding a reason—a birthday, a pay raise, or a new job—to celebrate.⁶⁰

Commercial retail venues also demonstrated the transformations of notions about manliness and drink during era. Changing attitudes regarding alcohol reflected changing ideas about being male, particularly among more affluent residents. While flappers were a common female character in these venues, the "sugar daddy" was the stereotypical man found in them. The sugar daddy, or "butter and eggs man," was a wealthy male who took pride in spending large sums of money, on food, on entertainment, and on women. The "powder puff boy," a man who leisured, drank, and danced, was another of the new types of masculinity of the era.⁶¹

One young man explained the popularity of illegal alcohol among adolescent males to reporters: "Why do we boys do it [drink]? It may be to keep in the running with modern life as it is portrayed in the movies, on the stage, or in modern novels. Carrying a flask, knowing the speakeasies, and wishing to be regarded as a man of the world may be the reason. Our relatives, friends, and co-workers all drink. We follow their example. We follow the custom of monkey see, monkey do."⁶² Alcohol became more involved as well in relationships between men and women. "Why do

⁶⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 1 May, 6 September, 1931.

⁶¹*Variety*, 6 October, 1926.

⁶²*Chicago Tribune*, 1 May, 6 September, 1931.

we get lit when out with the girls?” an interviewee in the *Tribune* rhetorically asked. “Ask the girls. We’ve got to carry the stuff along or order it, or we’re out of luck.”⁶³

Conclusion

Illegal drinking institutions helped to mold the culture and economy of the city. Chicago developed into one of the lively centers for nightlife in the country with unlimited open establishments. Only New York City rivaled Chicago in the number of speakeasies. Within illicit these drinking resorts, restraints and disciplines rooted in the nineteenth century gave way to more indulgent forms of behaviors. Alcohol, and the lifestyle associated with it, gained a new appeal. Not satisfied merely purchasing libations to drink at home, Chicago area residents risked arrest to be among fellow revelers. The act of imbibing alcohol in public, and how and where one chose to do, was embedded with cultural significance. The proliferation of retail drinking establishments in the 1920s and 1930s, and the activities that occurred in them, represented the triumph of entertainment, leisure, and consumption over the values of discipline and temperance of dry supporters. These outlets—providing amusement, food, and beverage—became the arenas where an increasing number of thrill-seekers (often young men and women) sought excitement, companionship, a social identity, or sexual encounters.

⁶³*Chicago Tribune*, 1 May, 6 September, 1931.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CRUSADERS FOR ALCOHOL

Boleslaw Lidikiewicz, an immigrant who worked as a janitor at an apartment complex on the southwest side of the city, became the center of much fury against dry laws in the early 1930s. Lidikiewicz assisted a fellow resident of his apartment building at 3901 South Kimball Street, Charles Wiley, by producing a few barrels of homebrew in his closet for him. Prohibition agents searched his home, found two half full barrels of beer, and arrested him. When Wiley, a member of the local American Legionnaires, confessed to the court that he was the recipient of the alcohol, prosecutors charged him with conspiracy. Numerous organizations condemned the charges. The local branch of the Crusaders, a national repeal organization, hired an attorney to defend Lidikiewicz and his case became symbolic of the preposterousness of the Eighteenth Amendment. Wet groups were not his only supporters he received. The Cook County Council of the American Legion soon expressed their dismay over the charges. Subsequently the national American Legion organization denounced it at a convention in Detroit, Michigan. The Legion soon voted for a resolution expressing approval for a nationwide referendum on Prohibition. The public attention did not affect Lidikiewicz's jury and they found him guilty. The judge sentenced him to serve sixty days in jail, which many Chicagoans deemed unreasonable. Thousands of foreign-born residents signed a

petition to have Likikiewicz pardoned and sent it to President Hoover. While they did not achieve the pardon, Wiley and Lidikiewicz became symbols to many of how usually lawful residents became criminals under Prohibition. Wiley and Lidikiewicz signified the union of the various groups who opposed Prohibition and helped to galvanize the local movement for repeal.¹

The above incident represented the increasing wet support in both Chicago and surrounding areas. Citizens who advocated the continuance of the Eighteenth Amendment appeared more and more out-of-touch. In addition to the multitudes of Chicagoans who objected to the Eighteenth Amendment before 1920, many residents who previously supported it came to denounce its ill effects on urban society. While dry reformers promised an alleviation of numerous social dilemmas, they found instead that social problems had multiplied. However, just as its passage was not inevitable, neither was its repeal. The mass antagonism toward the law as shown in the story above took time to develop. A number of political, cultural, and economic incentives came together to increase dissatisfaction. Opposition was always present throughout the 1920s but it became more widespread by the beginning of the 1930s.²

Despite persistent claims by enforcement agencies and politicians that Chicago was to be “arid” with the next round of raids, arrests, and prosecutions, the city continued to become wetter as bootleggers gained increasing power. These

¹*Chicago Tribune*, 5, 9, 25 November, 1931.

²Histories of repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment include David E. Kyvid, *Repealing National Prohibition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) and Kenneth D. Rose, *American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

results of the Eighteenth Amendment in Chicago provided a reason for full repeal at the national level. While New York City experienced similar consequences, commentators most often pointed to Chicago as an example of the disorder caused by the attempt to eradicate alcohol. The city became an emblem of the disastrous consequences of the desire to control the private behaviors of citizens, instigating both the concern and curiosity of outsiders. The nation, and to some extent the world, held an impression of the Midwest Metropolis as a lawless center of murder and crime. One contemporary Chicagoan described the city in the 1920s as a “jungle where only the strong survive and the weak fell to the wayside.” Chicago, however, was merely an extreme instance of the disorder experienced in cities nationwide.³

The increase in crime deeply penetrated the image of the city and its culture. Developments in popular culture reflected the prevalence of illegal establishments. The publicity was not always negative and carried a sense of enticement as well. Chicagoans, and the nation as a whole, to some extent had romanticized the underworld and many hoodlums acquired an air of glamour. Many residents viewed Al Capone and similar criminal leaders as “Robin Hood” characters who assisted and fought for the poor. The excitement of danger lured many outsiders to the city to witness the fabled tales themselves. Revelers often sought out venues where they might catch a glimpse of well-known criminal overlords. Thousands of tourists made their way to Chicago each year to experience the nightlife. The affinity for illegal activity carried over into the world of fashion where “speakeasy

³*Chicago Tribune*, 10 September, 1931; “Studs Terkel Comments and Presents Prohibition Program,” *Studs Terkel Program*, WMFT Radio (Chicago: WMFT, 5 December, 1983).

specials” and “speakeasy dresses” became a trend for women. By the end of the 1920s, the drama of the underworld further made its way into the themes of books and films. The “gang romance” book genre burgeoned and became widely popular among the reading public. Crime and the illegal alcohol economy greatly impacted the content of movies in the late 1920s and early 1930s as well. Speakeasies, gangsters, and the transforming gender models associated with them all made their way onto the big screen. Ben Hecht wrote two screenplays—*The Underworld* and *Scarface*—based on men he knew who participated in the alcohol trade. The film *Public Enemy* additionally depicted the criminal world of Chicago to a mass audience. These cultural artifacts all demonstrate the prevalence of crime during the era.⁴

Just as it is hard to pin the passage of dry laws on a single motivation, finding a sole reason for their repeal is unfeasible. A number of factors led to the mass resistance to Prohibition. Many supporters changed their minds after the numerous deaths from moonshine. By 1924, roughly one person died from poisoning every day in Chicago. In 1928, 541 men and women fell victim to alcohol abuse in Cook County, compared with only 70 deaths in 1918. According to the city’s coroner’s toxicologist, Dr. William McNally, the vast majority of these were the result of

⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 30 November, 1930, 13 September, 1931; 21 September, 1932; *Underworld* (1927). Directed by Joseph van Sternberg; *Scarface* (1932). Directed by Howard Hawks and Richard Rosson; *Public Enemy*. Directed by William A. Wellman. Capone’s philanthropic efforts and “Robin Hood” image are discussed in Robert J. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 290-292 and Humbert Nelli, *Italians in Chicago: A Study in Ethnic Mobility, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 221-222. For analysis of Hecht’s gang films and the influence of crime on movies and popular culture in the 1920s and 1930s see Lisa Boehm, *Popular Culture and the Enduring Myth of Chicago, 1871-1968* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Chapter Five.

poisoning. A federal study in 1928 found that less than two percent of 2,000 samples of whiskey were real. Many sellers and distributors of illegal alcohol held no qualms about serving what many called “coroners cocktails.” Drinkers, particularly on the West Side and South Side, became anxious as to if what they were purchasing was authentic or might send them to the hospital.⁵

A great deal of the opposition to the Eighteenth Amendment arose from concern for youth. Reformers in the city had long targeted boys and girls under twenty years old in order to prevent them from lives of “demoralization” and “dissipation.” Prohibitionists advocated a dry nation as a method of protecting youths from not only drunkenness but also from “the social evil” and gambling. However, by the late 1920s, many reform-minded residents wanted to repeal Prohibition in order to guard youths from intemperance and crime. The popularity of alcohol was in fact increasing among the young men and women. Many contemporary observers claimed that the Eighteenth Amendment was responsible for the breeding of crime among American teenagers. Chicagoans who previously supported Prohibition turned against it as they realized the impossibility of training the next generation to abstain from drinking. While many young women and adolescent girls were repulsed by their dates’ desire to drink, a number of them sought out men who were able to obtain a hip flask. The liquor bottle was a common sight among teens and young adults. One respondent to a survey on the issue claimed that “we’ve [young men] got to carry the stuff along or order it, or

⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 10 September, 1922, 26 February, 1923, 12 January, 1925, 27 November, 1928.

we're out of luck with . . . girls.”⁶

Northwestern University student Robert Preston provided a glimpse into how alcohol factored into the social life of young Chicagoans. Preston, who committed suicide in 1925, wrote detailed accounts of his escapades looking for, dating, and drinking with young woman. Following his death, the *Tribune* published his diary. Preston, against the wishes of his parents, toured the city, usually with his car, almost nightly with his male companions searching for ladies with whom he could “mug,” a contemporary slang term used to describe intimate encounters. His journeys, which often lasted until the early hours of the morning, took him into cafes, cabarets, and dance halls across the city and the suburbs. It was this life of pleasure that was becoming ever more common that alarmed many moral reformers of the era. Preston, a diabetic, had many emotional highs and lows. His body was found washed ashore by Lake Michigan.⁷

Many contemporary commentators recognized the role adults played in affecting young people's behavior. The attitude of older residents, the Chicago Crime Commission believed, taught young people that Prohibition may be disregarded and thus stimulated other violations of the law. Doris Blake summarized this sentiment writing of the Eighteenth Amendment in an editorial in the *Tribune*. She acknowledged that “we of the older generation . . . know what a

⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 23, 30 January 1923, 1 May, 1931; *Abendpost*, 18 December, 1932, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 13, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 13 April, 1925.

part it [Prohibition] has played in the making of young criminals” but also spoke of “its influence in reducing the standard of morality that served an older generation.” Ultimately, Blake claimed that “where a young generation is concerned example is the thing that counts...” She concluded “we elders can’t preach abstemiousness for the young and exhibit before their eyes the ‘sociable’ side of drinking.”⁸

More boys and girls were increasingly exposed to the court and incarceration systems due to the criminality of alcohol and its growing popularity among youth. The Wickersham report found that almost half of the prisoners under eighteen years old in federal prisons, such as the National Training School for Boys, were there because they had been convicted of violating the National Prohibition Act. Many commentators criticized the cruel treatment and torture of these boys and girls for merely partaking in an activity that had endured for centuries. These facility utilized dungeon cells, flogging, bread and water diets, and leg irons as methods of punishment. Local newspaper editorials argued that these young detainees were not being reformed or treated but instead being prepared for a future of crime when they complete their confinement. The general public in Chicago agreed.⁹

While many residents who supported repeal embraced the changing social and gender norms of the 1910s and 1920s, some wets pointed toward the mass entrance of women into open drinking venues as a reason for the elimination of the

⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 27 December, 1931.

⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 July, 1931.

Eighteenth Amendment. Most measures and estimates seemed to indicate an increase in female alcohol consumption during the Prohibition era, particularly within open commercial establishments. The Keeley Institute of Dwight, Illinois, an early alcohol rehabilitation center that treated numerous clients from Chicago, received a dramatic increase in the number of women applicants for treatment. In 1919, only a handful of female alcoholics used their services. By the late 1920s, the institute stated that more females were applying, so many so they claimed that they were embarrassed and ceased to provide figures for the number of ladies admitted to the institute. The transformation was telling of the new emphasis on drinking among women's culture.¹⁰

The manner in which enforcement officials investigated and prosecuted violators angered many Chicagoans. The high cost of enforcement for local and federal governments was not the only issue. A prevalent idea was that officials arrested poor residents who broke the law but looked the other way with the wealthy. One juror in the municipal court who was responsible for deciding on the guilt of two men who stole eighteen cases of whiskey from millionaire clothier Maurice Rothschild expressed this belief. "This court is not is not greatly impressed with a system of so-called prohibition which permits a man of means to maintain an extensive wine cellar, while a poor man has to sneak around to get a glass of beer," stated the juror. The municipal judge agreed, claiming that "Prohibition as now enforced is a poor man's law and the rich man's huge joke at the expense of his less

¹⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 5 October, 1931.

fortunate brother.” His opinion was of the majority. Despite such feelings, many enforcement officers did not play favorites and considered all lawbreakers to be worthy of arrest.¹¹

Violence and death resulting from attempts to enforce the law precipitated much antagonism toward the Eighteenth Amendment. The increased number of shootings by enforcement officials stirred many residents antagonism toward the law. Federal officials often indiscriminately shot men and women when they entered businesses and homes during raids. For instance, after agent Jacob Mass shot alleged bootlegger Frank Davis of 1706 North Clark Street in a raid, the Department of Justice held a special investigation. Maas critically wounded Madden, who was unarmed and crippled with two clubfeet. As residents read about more unnecessary deaths caused by enforcement agents in both Chicago and in other cities and towns across the nation, the support for repeal intensified. Another five hundred Prohibition agents who died while trying to enforce the law only helped to solidify the perception of violence surrounding Prohibition.¹²

Related to these killings was the negative sentiment toward law enforcement and the government. Because the police and Prohibition agents enforced a law that was largely unpopular, residents were apt to have more sympathy with criminal leaders and other participants in the alcohol underground. More and more Chicagoans from a wider variety of backgrounds came to detest the government and

¹¹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 March, 1923.

¹²*Chicago Tribune*, 24 January, 25 September, 1927, 1 February, 1928, 8 July, 1929.

their agents of law enforcement. According to the *Tribune*, Americans viewed the police as the guardians of an unpopular law who were “disliked and distrusted as they never were before Prohibition.” Anton Cermak argued that the Eighteenth Amendment had not “render[ed] people more moral but, on the contrary, it degrade[d] them.” He believed it had “lower[ed] respect for all law and incite[d] citizens to circumvent it.” “Nothing has had a more demoralizing effect on the American people than Prohibition,” fumed the *Abendpost*, a German-language newspaper, in 1933.¹³

The failure of the Eighteenth Amendment to reduce unlawful behavior—and its effect of actually augmenting it—figured heavily in its increasing unpopularity. While the influence of Prohibition on the amount other crimes is debatable, it most certainly enlarged the number of men and women encountering the court system by its very nature of being a law constantly disobeyed. The judicial and incarceration systems were overwhelmed. From 1891 to 1919, the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois at Chicago prosecuted 4,804 cases. By contrast, from 1919 to 1933, the same court instigated 21,065 cases. The situation caused backlogs of cases that sat for months in both federal and local courts. Incarceration levels skyrocketed within all branches of city, state, and federal jails and prisons. Overcrowded conditions burgeoned at Leavenworth, at other federal institutions, and at the area’s numerous county jails. The federal penitentiary system multiplied

¹³*Chicago Tribune*, 5 October, 1926; *Denni Hlasatel*, 6 March, 1922, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 1, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

as well. By 1931, sixty percent of all persons sentenced in the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois at Chicago who were serving time were convicted for violating Prohibition. Already by 1921, the Cook County Jail held a record 860 inmates. By mid-decade, the city needed more incarceration space and erected a second jail at 2700 South California Avenue in 1928. In 1920, Illinois state penal institutions held 4,000 prisoners. By 1931, they were incarcerating over 10,000 men and women. The local police force itself also inflated. In the early 1920s, the Chicago Police Department increased by 1,000 officers. Ten years later, the department swelled by another 1,000 policemen.¹⁴

By the late 1920s, the world of crime seemed to dominate Chicago. Offenses of all types seemed to continually rise. The municipal court reported that the total number of criminal cases filed increased from 114,000 annually to 319,000 between 1919 and 1924.¹⁵ This general escalation in lawbreaking during the 1920s and early 1930s was a primary motivation for repeal, as many observers believed the Eighteenth Amendment to be its cause. Illegal drinking establishments often provided havens for other types of lawbreakers, such as the 42 gang, a group of young criminals based on the Near West Side. Murders, kidnappings, robberies, and other crimes, increased rapidly. Charles R. Holden, president of the Chicago Crime Commission, saw the “development of the gun criminal as a professional, due partly to his employment in labor wars but largely to his part in bootlegging.” Hijackings,

¹⁴*Criminal Justice*, April 1927, 5; *Chicago Herald Examiner*, 23 January, 1921; *Chicago Tribune*, 23 July, 23 September, 13 October, 1931.

¹⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 16 January, 1925.

swindling, and murder were common tools of bootleggers. Almost 2,000 Chicago residents paid the ultimate price for the participation in the underground market in alcohol. Many of these victims were small-time bootleggers, retailers, runners, or manufacturers. Men who otherwise might have been among the increasing number of holdup men, committed calculated murders in order to remove competition and rule markets. Reformers then looked to repeal not necessarily as return of principles of liberty but instead as a method to combat unprecedented lawlessness.¹⁶

High profile killings of members of the illegal alcohol economy were a mere percentage of the total violence of the era. Murders not associated with the alcohol underworld continued to proliferate. After a sharp drop from 330 to 194 between 1919 and 1920, annual homicides reached 394 by 1925. They continued to increase. Following the trend of the early twentieth century, these murders most often evolved from robberies or thefts conducted by volatile younger perpetrators who did not know their victims. The fear of death or violence in the streets contributed to a sense of disorder as the Prohibition era progressed.¹⁷

Likewise, after a brief reduction in spousal hostility, domestic violence later soared in the 1920s. Many residents blamed illicit drinking for the increased

¹⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 20 January, 1924, 6 December, 1931; *Abendpost*, 25 December, 1932, 24 July, 1935, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 18, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Jeffrey S. Adler, *First in Violence: Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago, 1875-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), Chapter Seven and Conclusion.

¹⁷*Criminal Justice*, 27 April, 1927; Jeffrey S. Adler, *First in Violence: Deepest in Dirt*, Chapter Seven and Conclusion. Michael Lesy provides detailed accounts of some of the most publicized murders of the era in *Murder City: The Bloody History of Chicago in the Twenties* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).

murders and brutality, as the different sorts of poisonous concoctions drove drinkers mad to commit acts of aggression. Many killers themselves pointed to the alcohol as a reason for their actions. For instance, Richard Duke, a fifty-four year old jeweler, blamed bad moonshine when he cut the throat of a female companion with a razor blade. "Before prohibition when I got drunk I knew what I was doing. Now I can't get the good stuff and the moonshine sets me crazy. I killed her because I was crazy drunk and didn't know what I was doing," Duke told a municipal judge.¹⁸

Many public officials took notice of the deteriorating crime situation due to dry laws and articulated their negative impact. Superior Court of Cook County Judge Joseph B. David expressed his animosity toward the criminalization of alcohol at numerous public gatherings. In the summer of 1931, David told the Kiwanis Club that the two major reasons for the increase in crime in Chicago were Prohibition (and other sumptuary laws) and poverty. He referred to the contemporary legal order as "medieval" and called the Volstead Act "the greatest single crime excitant in history." The Eighteenth Amendment, he believed, was "class legislation that was never intended to be enforced, but was merely used as a political subterfuge." Major crime he contended had increased more than twenty percent in the years since 1919. Prohibition, he claimed, was responsible for seventy five percent of the growth. On another occasion, David voiced his opinion to other legal and judicial officials at a symposium held by the Covenant Club, a social organization established by the B'nai B'rith. "It is the experience of every judge in the criminal court that

¹⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 17 January, 1925.

increase in crimes of violence is due to prohibition,” he told fellow members of the bar and enforcement agencies. David claimed “no great lawyer and no great thinker is in favor of such a law. It has created a new coterie of crime, the racketeer and crooked politician, and it has even reached into the prosecutor’s office.” He then described federal Prohibition agents as a “horde of blackmailers.” Judge David’s attitude toward the dry law was common and shared by many of his contemporaries.¹⁹

A primary reason for the rise of the repeal mentality was the increased influence and wealth of the organized underworld. The strength of the syndicated alcohol economy in Chicago only increased during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Observers pointed the finger at the Eighteenth Amendment for the heightened wealth and power of criminal leaders. “For goodness sake,” railed the *Tribune* on the eleven-year anniversary after the measures took effect, “if it hadn’t been for little Prohibition, where would Al [Capone] be today? Well, he wouldn’t be lolling around in his silk pajamas in his billion dollar marble palace in Miami.”²⁰ Another *Tribune* editorial claimed that Capone “was a direct product of federal legislation.” As part of the *Tribune*’s official “Platform for Chicagoland” the paper called for an “End of the Reign of Gangdom.” More Chicagoans began connecting the rise of organized criminal networks with unprecedented power to Prohibition. For everyday residents, the “Robin Hood” persona of Capone and other criminal leaders was

¹⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 11 June, 16 November, 1931.

²⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 16 January, 1931.

increasingly challenged by the violent murderer image. The movement against Capone overlapped with the campaign against the Eighteenth Amendment. Nonetheless, a great number of men and women continued to believe in the charity of Capone and other criminal leaders and thought (and hoped) that federal officials would never incarcerate them.²¹

The stock market crash of 1929 and the subsequent Depression did little to affect the income of criminal organizations. After a brief period of stagnation, the alcohol trade continued to flourish. While still short on money, the unemployed sought solace through beer and liquor. Further, many men who did not find legitimate work sought to enter the underground market to gain profit and support their families. The Capone syndicate in fact grew stronger and gained more members between 1929 and 1933, even as government officials prosecuted members and sought to eliminate it. The downturn did, however, influence how dealers sold alcohol, as more small speakeasies began selling beer in large volumes for use at home. This practice was more affordable than purchasing it glass by glass.²²

Many Chicagoans began resisting the manipulations of the underworld. By the end of the 1920s, a syndicate headed by Johnny Torrio evolved into *the* Syndicate—or *the* Oufit—ran by Capone. However, the growth of the Torrio and Capone organizations gradually upset more and more alcohol workers as the

²¹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 September, 26 October, 1931.

²²*Chicago Tribune*, 21 June, 1931.

violence against them expanded. “Lieutenants” visited more leisure institutions in order to compel owners to buy from them. If he refused, they promised violence. Even if one was not directly affiliated with crime, they were increasingly likely to encounter illegal activity. Criminal organizations expanded into the world of legitimate business and culture. Capone, for instance, came to own many musicians, as they made their livings by playing in syndicate-run venues. The Syndicate also attempted to move into the milk delivery business by overtaking the Milk Drivers Union. Despite being stymied in the milk business, criminal leaders came to control many trade unions in the city, which prompted vocal opposition from the Chicago Federation of Labor. They encroached on licit businesses as well. Using St. Louis attorney Edward O’Hare as a front, Capone and his assistants started the Hawthorne Kennel Club, a dog-racing track, in Cicero in 1927. The Kennel Club made profits of over a half million dollars a year. If not for repeal, there is no telling what sort of Chicago might have resulted.²³

Had the underworld developed with little inter-organization violence, the support for repeal might not have gained such popularity so quickly. Increased warfare between factions of the syndicate alarmed many city residents. The killings of a number of high profile men increased public worry. Violence related to the alcohol economy spread outside the city into the countryside and small towns.

By the beginning of Mayor Thompson’s third term in 1927, the city’s gangs

²³*Chicago Tribune*, 14 November, 1931, 8 October, 1950; *Federation News*, 7 January, 1933; Travis; Andrew Cohen, *Racketeers Progress: Chicago and the Struggle for the Modern American Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

and their territories were solidified. The newspapers began referring to “the north side gangsters” and the “south side gangsters.” There were, however, other centers of power. After 1924, a number of families rivaled Torrio’s dominance. The remnants of O’Bannion’s organization—the “north side gangsters”—were Torrio’s, and later Capone’s, main sources of competition and animosity. By the late 1920s, Roger Touhy became a major leader on the northwest side by controlling the alcohol trade in Des Plaines. While only a handful of men reached the upper echelons of organized crime, a number below them wanted to take their power. Numerous smaller coteries formulated that challenged the rule of larger syndicates. Some of these groups worked with Capone and functioned as satellite organizations to oversee particular areas of his empire. The Sheldon, McGeoghegan, De Coursey, Genna, Murray, Maddox Circus, and Guilfoyle gangs acted as overlords for their designated territory. Jake Gusick, and his brother Harry, came to act as chief of the syndicate as Capone himself ran into an intense drive to bring him to incarceration. According to the *Tribune*, Gusick accumulated “several million dollars” over the course of the 1920s.²⁴

A series of well-publicized killings helped to turn attitudes against the underworld. The murders of assistant state’s attorney William McSwiggin and *Tribune* reporter Jake Lingle were major events in publicly revealing the growing extent of the underworld. An unknown shooter gunned down McSwiggin in the suburb Cicero while he was in the company of known criminals. Although

²⁴Allsop, 45; *Chicago Tribune*, 13 September, 1931.

investigators never charged a suspect, public opinion believed McSwiggin guilty of shady dealings and was the recipient of graft money. This was most clearly divulged when Al Capone told reporters that McSwiggin was a good friend and that “he [Capone] got what he paid for.”²⁵

Outrage toward organized crime and opposition to the Eighteenth Amendment increased early 1929. George “Bugs” Moran’s refusal to stop encroaching on Capone territory precipitated retaliation. On Valentine’s Day, as Moran workers were about to unload trucks of beer in a warehouse at 2122 North Clark Street, a car full of anonymous Capone followers awaited their arrival. The Moran workers entered the building and were soon followed by four men, two in police uniforms. The uniformed men entered the garage and proceeded as if they were making arrests. Instead, they withdrew their guns and fired countless bullets into the seven men. Moran himself was not among them, attending to other business that day. Following the incident, the *Tribune* ran a series of articles by James O’Donnell Bennett that fully exposed the development of the Torrio-Capone syndicate. Meanwhile, Capone and Moran contrived a pact in May 1929 that successfully confined the distribution area of Moran and his associates primarily on the North Side until the end of Prohibition.²⁶

Jake Lingle’s 1930 murder revealed that not only were the city’s police and politicians colluding with criminals but so was the media. The assailants, who

²⁵Allsop, Chapter Eleven.

²⁶*Chicago Daily News*, 10 January, 1930; Robert J. Schoenberg, *Mr. Capone*. (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 207-216.

appeared to have known Lingle, killed him downtown in an underground tunnel on his way to board a train for the racetrack in the Englewood community. While the public initially believed Lingle to be a heroic figure killed to prevent an expose of crime, his dealings with underworld figures eventually surfaced. Chicagoans were not sure if they should hail Lingle or hate him. Making sixty-five dollars a week at the *Tribune*, Lingle managed to die with hundreds of thousands of dollars in his bank account. The local police tried for months to charge a gunman. On numerous occasions, it appeared they had found their man. But the murder and the inability of law enforcement agencies to solve it produced another round of agitation in the press and in opinion. After the attack on Lingle, Pat Rouché (a member of the Department of Treasury's Special Intelligence Unit), the *Tribune*, and a host of other commentators amplified their efforts to suppress the underworld. Rouché and a crew of fifteen assistants raided speakeasies, houses of prostitution, and gambling joints (literally attacking them with crowbars, sledgehammers, and axes) in an attempt to break the back of the Syndicate and discover a clue as to the identity of the killer. While the attempt did take an enormous amount of property away from the Outfit, it did little to find the culprit. In 1931, West Side criminal leader Michael Heitler explained Lingle's critical role as an intermediary with Capone's group in a letter to investigators detailing the workings of booze transactions.²⁷

The connection between crime, enforcement agencies, and politics was most clearly exposed in the aftermath of the Lingle murder. In the investigations

²⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 19 April, 1931, 17 September, 1931.

following, police gained entrance to the safety deposit boxes of Jack Zuta, a former aide to Dean O'Bannion, who was an assistant to Al Capone at the time. The boxes revealed that he had done business with a number of governmental officials: a judge, a former judge, the brother of a judge, two former state senators, a policeman, a former chief deputy coroner, a suburban police chief, the assistant business manager of the Chicago Board of Education, an alderman, and innumerable members of the underworld. The list of implicated men also included the city editor of the *Chicago Daily News*. Municipal judge Joseph Schulman was shown to have received numerous checks and notes from Zuta as well. While Schulman explained these transactions as a mere lending of money, they appeared to more likely be the trail of a system of protection. Investigators additionally found a canceled check from municipal judge Emanuel Eller, who tried to explain that it was merely a campaign contribution.²⁸

The movement against crime reached its pinnacle expression in the development of an organized effort to put Al Capone in prison. Because local governments did not create the laws that produced powerful criminal leaders, some cities and towns, including Chicago, held that it was not their responsibility to convict them. The federal government ultimately took accountability for figures such as Capone by the late 1920s. They brought many seasoned investigators from Washington D. C. to assist with gathering evidence. With men such as United States District Attorney George E. Q. Johnson and Elliot Ness, federal authorities did not

²⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 13 April 1931; Allsop, 160-165.

cease their battle until they achieved some form of victory, namely the imprisonment of Capone and dozens of his closest assistants and allies.²⁹

Prior to Capone's conviction for income tax evasion, the United States District Court in Chicago witnessed nine fellow criminal leaders sentenced to prison terms, including Terrance Druggan, Frankie Lake, and Ralph Capone. A previous attempt by government officials to prosecute Capone the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois failed in 1926; however, circumstances changed by the early 1930s. Numerous private groups such as the Chicago Crime Commission, which local business and community leaders in response to the growing disorder in the city, contributed to this effort. While some Chicagoans held deep admiration for Capone and his organization, the Valentine's Day massacre and other extreme levels of violence produced a distain for him and his cronies. Following Commissioner Russell's edict that closed all the cities' illicit establishment, many saloonkeepers openly complained in the newspapers about the gangsters' bootleggers and merely wanted to go about their business. George E. Q. Johnson, who became the district attorney for the Northern District of Illinois in 1927, was a critical factor in not only convicting Capone but also a number of other wanted criminals. The government originally indicted Capone and over sixty of his subordinates on five thousand separate charges. While it appeared that Capone manufactured a plea bargain, Judge Wilkerson rejected it. Despite not being

²⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 10 August, 1931; Jonathan Eig details the campaign against Capone in *Get Capone: The Secret Plot that Captured America's Most Wanted Gangster* (New York Simon & Schuster, 2010).

convicted on a single count of violating the Prohibition law, a jury eventually found him guilty of tax evasion. Judge James H. Wilkerson sentenced him to seventeen years in federal prison and a fifty thousand dollar fine.³⁰

One resident wrote the *Tribune* to explain the futility of Capone's incarceration. "Is there any scarcity of blue-chinned, heavy-fingered boys ready to step into the breach created by the retirement of Al and a few of the firm?" the writer asked. "Even a congressman will agree that you can't alter effect by ignoring cause. Prohibition is the cause and repeal or modification is the only lasting cure," he concluded. The writer's assessment was accurate. Despite the hopes of numerous government officials and citizens, the Syndicate did not disappear and its power remained viable within the city following Capone's incarceration. A number of men vied for his position. Some criminal leaders had little viable chance but attempted an effort regardless. For instance, George "Red" Barker thought he had the abilities to replace Capone. Barker, a rising criminal boss, was a bootlegging and gambling leader. He had also come to control almost fifty labor unions. Instead of the chief of the underground alcohol economy, Barker ended up with eighteen machine gun bullets in his body, the victim of a hit man.³¹

The Syndicate had a steady supply of talented and ambition criminal entrepreneurs ready to replace the incarcerated leader. Until he reached Atlanta in 1932, however, Capone continued to run the outfit behind bars. The Cook County

³⁰Eig, Chapters 40 to 44; *Chicago Tribune*, 18, 20 October, 13 June, 1931.

³¹*Chicago Tribune*, 22, June, 1931, 18 June, 1932.

Jail afforded Capone, who stayed on the hospital ward of the jail, the opportunity to receive unlimited guests and access to a telephone. His visitors included City Sealer Dan Serritella, his aides, and multiple aldermen and state congressmen. As Capone became less available, Joe Fusco temporarily was in charge of handling the finances of the organization. The man of choice to replace Capone was eventually Jack “Greasy Thumb” Guzik. Guzik, who was already convicted of violating the Prohibition laws and tax evasion, was particularly skilled at handling money and was successful at finding ways for the Syndicate to profit following repeal. Under Guzik, the Outfit continued to operate through 1932 and 1933. Many Chicagoans wondered if the capture of Capone was enough. The alcohol underworld persisted with or without his avarice and force. Once it was clear that Capone’s imprisonment was not going to prevent the spread of crime and corruption, repeal gained more traction.³²

Underworld influence, however, was not the only issue on the minds of Chicagoans in the early 1930s. The onslaught the Depression contributed to the argument to legalize alcohol. Many repeal proponents claimed that legal alcohol would create millions of jobs in the midst of a period when they were so scarce. Those losing their jobs tended to blame the ban on booze as the reason for the financial downturn. Cartoonists such as Carey Orr from the *Tribune* depicted images that presented Prohibition as the primary cause of the downturn in the economy,

³²Papers of George E. Q. Johnson, Record Group 118, National Archives and Records Administration, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 18 June, 1932.

despite the fact that numerous countries that were not dry experienced similar financial conditions as the United States did. Many critics believed the government was spending too much tax money on enforcement when they could be directing it more beneficially. Repeal would also bring tax money to a government in growing debt, partially due to the inability of European nations to pay back war loans. Policy analysts argued that legalized beer and wine would raise this needed tax money to a government that was running over a billion-dollar deficit. Using the discussions exhibited in newspapers at the time, it appeared that the issue of Prohibition was more influential in debate than the Depression during the 1932 elections.³³

Other institutions were less optimistic about the effects of repeal on the economy. At the end of 1932, when legalized beer seemed all but certain, the *Defender* wondered why the federal government was not doing more to help to provide food, clothes, and shelter instead of merely legalizing beer. One *Defender* editorial concluded that “if the return of beer will serve to return us to our former manner of living; that is, banishing the evil influences of the bootlegger and the gangster, we will be benefited. But the return of beer must not be considered as the solution of our many social and economic ills.” The *Defender* proved correct in its assessment. While the Twenty-first Amendment did legitimize workers in the alcohol industry and alleviate some of the suffering, it hardly was the panacea that many repeal supporters thought it to be.³⁴

³³*Chicago Tribune*, 18 January, 28 July, 5 August, 20 September, 1931.

³⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 19 November, 1932.

As the resistance to Prohibition increased, drys additionally became less attractive. Nationally, internationally, and in Chicago, the increasing negative exposure of prohibitionists added to the sentiment against the Eighteenth Amendment. Experiments in the criminalization of alcohol had failed in numerous countries and proponents of it looked to be fighting a losing battle. Prohibition and reform organizations such as the Chicago Law and Order League, the Illinois Anti Saloon League, and the Committee of Fifteen lost their prominence they attained in the early decades of the century.³⁵

The story of Daniel Gilday exemplifies the downward appeal of drys. As president of the Englewood Law and Order League and director of the Chicago Better Government Association, Daniel Gilday staunchly advocated temperance and restraint. In his personal life, however, he followed another path. Receiving a star badge from Chief of Police Morgan Collins, Gilday served as a private undercover officer, finding evidence of liquor law violations. During his time spent gathering evidence during the 1920s, he took up the activity of drinking. On a fall night in 1931, he stumbled home after a night of investigating and revelry. Two young men approached him, attempting to assist him home. Instead of accepting the offer, Gilday withdrew his revolver, which Prohibition agents gave him to help in his efforts, and shot one of the boys in the stomach with a bullet. While the young man eventually lived, Gilday faced criminal charges. Acquaintances described him as one

³⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 9 September, 1931.

who carried “a Bible in his right hand and a flask in his left.”³⁶ Gilday presented to Chicagoans the hypocrisy and futility of Prohibition. The very individuals who brought about a dry city did not hold up to the unreachable expectations they demanded of others. By the early 1930s, the impossibility of Prohibition and the necessity of legal alcohol became a much-discussed problem.

Ultimately, the support for repeal was bolstered by the gradual change of mind of middle-class institutions and the industrial elite. Increasing numbers of wealthy dry supporters changed camps, resulting in decreasing donations. By the 1930s, the *Defender* renounced its former adherence to Prohibition and instead referred to it as “a mental delusion.” The Chicago Board of Trade, citing the potential increase in the price of barley, oats, and corn, voted among their organization to support repeal. The Chicago Bar Association—just as the American Bar Association—reversed course on their stance and officially supported the elimination of dry laws. The Industrial Club of Chicago, the Chicago Association of Commerce, and the presidents and directors of numerous Chicago businesses likewise strongly advocated modification of the Eighteenth Amendment and Volstead Act in order to help “control crime.” This support from prominent and wealthy citizens bolstered the cause of wets.³⁷

At the national level, John D. Rockefeller Jr., who had supported Prohibition

³⁶*Chicago Tribune*, 30 November, 1 December, 1931.

³⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 12 May, 8 August, 19 September, 1931; *Chicago Defender*, 3 December, 1932; *Abendpost*, 2 August, 1933, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 13, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

with great initial enthusiasm, openly opposed the Eighteenth Amendment by 1932, coming out for repeal and angering many dry groups. "Many of our best citizens," he commented, "piqued at what they regarded as an infringement of their private rights, have openly and unabashed disregarded the eighteenth amendment [sic]; as an inevitable result respect for all laws has been greatly lessened; crime has increased to an unprecedented degree."³⁸

A number of new repeal groups burgeoned during the late 1920s as the negative impact of the Eighteenth Amendment became more apparent and more citizens joined the cause. The largest and most inclusive anti-Prohibition group in Chicago was the Crusaders, a national group headed by the Colonel Ira L. Reeves. While founded in Cleveland, not Chicago, the group soon established a national headquarters in Chicago. Focusing on the surge in criminal organizations and lawlessness since 1919, the Crusaders appealed to the middle-class values of many Chicagoans. They also gained the support of numerous prominent individuals, such as attorney Clarence Darrow. The group's constitution declared: "The Crusaders are opposed to the Eighteenth Amendment because it has failed of its purpose and has, in fact, popularized the use of intoxicants; because it is debauching our youth, diminishing our respect for all law, corrupting our government, and threatening our economic stability through its development of a rich and powerful criminal class."³⁹

Believing that power was in numbers, the Crusaders sought to build a larger

³⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 7, 8 June 1932.

³⁹"Constitution of the Crusaders," Fred Blaisdell Papers, Box 1, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 22 October, 1931.

organization than the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment and the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform, with whom they also cooperated. The Crusaders actively reached out to immigrant groups for their support and invited them to their events. Soon they became a critical element in the movement against the Eighteenth Amendment in the city and attained a membership in the thousands. Much like the Anti-Saloon League, they fought for their cause by attempting to elect candidates who were supportive of their mission. In another similarity to the Anti-Saloon League, the group focused heavily at the local level and set up organizations in most of the wards, districts, and precincts in Chicago. They endorsed candidates regardless of their party and solely based on their records and stance on the Eighteenth Amendment. Their endorsements became well-known news and their men almost always won. The Crusaders launched a massive public campaign to elect a "wet" governor, state representatives in congress, and a wet president.⁴⁰

The Crusaders held parades, rallies, and other demonstrations in effort to get citizens to pay attention to the fight for repeal and vote wet. These assemblies were part of a larger effort by residents to publically voice their discontent. The Crusaders felt it particularly useful to organize women to protest. The largest downtown demonstration involved an airplane and boat exhibition in which an effigy of an old man representing Prohibition fell from a plane into the "wet" Lake

⁴⁰"Summary of the Activities of the Chicago Office of the Crusaders," Fred Blaisdell Papers, Box 1, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois; *Chicago Tribune*, 22 October, 1931; *Abendpost*, 13 August, 1929, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 13.

Michigan.⁴¹

Religious figures who opposed Prohibition became more vocal as well. For instance, the Reverend Edmund G. Mapes of Christ's Church expressed his views in the Crusaders official newspaper. Mapes criticized the increase in drinking among the youth, the increasing prison population, and the greater organization of the underworld as the result of the Eighteenth Amendment. He claimed that organized crime had "become an invisible and inviolable Empire whose income equals that of the greatest corporations of industry." "Al Capone spends more than the gross income of great corporations each year to bribe and corrupt those charged with enforcement of the law," Mapes believed. The reverend concluded that the only solution to the "growing menace to law and order" was to repeal Prohibition and place the manufacture and sale of alcohol under the legal control of the government.⁴²

The cultural repudiation of dry laws and the crime and disorder it caused began to express itself politically by the end of the 1920s. With the election of William Hale Thompson as mayor in 1927, the city made it clear that they did not want the enforcement of Prohibition that Mayor Dever represented. Dever's insistence that the city uphold the law proved costly to his political career. However, residents' support for Thompson was short-lived. In 1928, Chicagoans permanently rejected the Republican political machine created by Thompson,

⁴¹*Chicago Tribune*, 7 June, 1932.

⁴²*The Crusader*, 1 March, 1931, in Fred Blaisdell Papers, Box 1, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

largely due to its inherent corruption and connections to the black market.

During the primary elections, voters defeated all of Thompson's endorsed candidates. By the 1931 mayoral election, voters were thoroughly disgusted with him. The city turned to the fiercely wet Democrat Anton Cermak. Chicago never again elected a Republican mayor. Thompson was the last.⁴³

Cermak cited many reasons for repeal. Just as other residents, he ardently opposed the destruction of liberty under Prohibition. He once referred to the United States as a "the land of the free that now has more land and less freedom." Cermak additionally spoke of the increasing number of prisoners detained and patients at the state insane asylum as the result of the Eighteenth Amendment. An immigrant himself, he appealed to the newly arrived class of Chicagoans when discussing Prohibition. Running for United States Senate in 1928 allowed him to spread his message of repeal. During the campaign, he argued there were inherent class discriminations in the law. Speaking at a fall festival in Antioch, Illinois during the 1928 campaign, he told the crowd, "This is a rich man's law. He who can afford to pay the price can stock his basement with all kinds of liquor but the poor man must do without it."⁴⁴ Cermak particularly pointed to the economic benefits of repeal, particularly after the Great Depression commenced in 1929. Prohibition, he argued, was responsible for the raising of taxes, due to the loss of both local revenue from licenses and federal revenue from sales taxes. Additionally in Chicago, landlords

⁴³*Chicago Tribune*, 11 April, 1928.

⁴⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 14 September, 1928, 13 October, 1931.

were forced to leave many building's empty and their values depreciated considerably. Ridding the country of the Eighteenth Amendment would both provide jobs and decrease taxes.

Using the Eighteenth Amendment as an issue of unification, Cermak forged an alliance between Chicago's heterogeneous cultures and communities during the 1920s and early 1930s. Cermak was engaged in the city's cosmopolitan and bohemian cultures. He was among those in attendance at the Dill Pickle's frequent intellectual discussions. His efforts to form alliances between ethnic groups began in the early twentieth century with the formation of the United Societies of Local Self Government. He symbolized not only the resistance to Prohibition but also for immigrant groups' rise to prominence. Polish, Italian, Irish, and black Chicagoans rallied behind him and the wet cause.⁴⁵

Although Cermak was a committed wet supporter, he sought to eliminate the influence of the remnants of Capone's network of criminals and waged a war against local speakeasies in preparation for legal alcohol. While Capone was in federal prison, the underworld continued to blossom and Cermak wished to prevent its takeover of the industry following repeal. Unlike Thompson, he used the local police to enforce the law. He authorized a city ordinance that raised license fees for malt-liquor sellers and restricted them from being located in private residences. Cermak additionally brought extra measures to clean up illegal establishments in

⁴⁵*Chicago Times*, 22 August, 1937, found in Dil Pickle Collection, Box 1, Folder 28, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

preparation for the Century of Progress World's Fair in 1933 and 1934. He made an effort to drive the remains of the Capone syndicate out of the city before repeal so they did not muscle their way into the legitimate alcohol business. His actions earned him praise from private anti-crime organizations such as the Chicago Crime Commission and the Secret Six.⁴⁶

Despite his war on Capone, some historians and commentators have pointed to the connection between Cermak and criminal leaders. According to one historian, his attacks on illegal alcohol were meant to assist particular overlords. Following Capone's incarceration, Cermak allegedly attempted to have Ted Newberry and "Big Bill" Johnson control gambling in the city. Others point to his cozy relationship with the booze boss of the northwest side Roger Touhy. Further, while Cermak's ties to the alcohol underworld remain unclear, it is clear that he allowed systems of graft related to gambling to continue among police. Regardless of his dubious connections to organized crime, Cermak represented legal alcohol as opposed to underworld rule to most Chicagoans.⁴⁷

By the early 1930s, Prohibition was the defining issue in Chicago politics.

Wet voters and politicians came from both the local Democratic and Republicans

⁴⁶*Sonntagpost*, 25 December, 1932, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 13, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Roger Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War: Major Edward J. Kelly of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1984), 103-104.

⁴⁷Editorialist John Kass of the *Tribune* maintained that Cermak held close ties to underworld figures such as Touhy and that the Capone syndicate killed him, although he does not document his evidence. See *Chicago Tribune*, 15 December, 2005; Kenneth Allsop contended that Cermak "moved nimbly to rationalize and control the city's gambling enterprises" after Prohibition in *The Bootleggers: The Story of Chicago's Prohibition Era* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1961), 218, Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War*, 103-104.

parties. At times, members of the two parties argued whose organization was more responsible for the Eighteenth Amendment, neither side wanting to take blame.⁴⁸

The state held a referendum on the state Search and Seizure Act—the law criminalizing alcohol within Illinois and making it possible for local officials to enforce the law—during the 1930 election. The results were 1,060,004 votes for repeal and 523,130 against it. The vote was even more lopsided in Chicago. Prompted by these results and the increasing public sentiment against Prohibition, the Illinois state legislature moved to revoke the law, an action that the body had rejected twice before. As soon as the house and senate returned for the new session, they successfully voted on the measure. The law would have relieved the city police and county sheriff from participating in enforcement. Nonetheless, Republican Governor Louis L. Emerson vetoed it, eliciting anger among his constituents, who refused to further support him. The veto put a stamp on the Republican Party in Illinois that they were against repeal and doomed both Emerson and his party for the 1932 elections.⁴⁹

The year of 1932 was critical for wets' ultimate victory. Women who turned against the Eighteenth Amendment due to its nefarious consequences were a major component of this movement toward repeal. An unusual number of women ran for office, many who opposed Prohibition. They cited the fact the making something

⁴⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 2 December, 1931.

⁴⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 2, 14 January, 1931.

illegal only makes people want to do it more and the increase in crime. Female candidates posed for photos drinking near beer to demonstrate their support.⁵⁰

Potential governors were adamant about the detrimental effects of the Eighteenth Amendment. When Republican Omer N. Custer began his campaign for governor he maintained much support from Chicago politicians, until he proved timid on the liquor issue. The party then went to former attorney general Edward J. Brundage who promised to be the "wettest" Republican candidate in the race. Oscar Carlson, a Republican candidate for governor, accused the dry law of diverting money from government coffers to the safety deposits boxes of organized crime leaders. "Destroy the speakeasy system by a process of education . . . rather than by filling our jails through law created offenses," Carlstrom stated to a crowd at the beginning of his campaign. Other potential governors agreed. Henry Horner, a Democratic candidate for governor and local probate judge, mocked the effort of federal officials to dry up the city in time for the Republican and Democratic presidential conventions, both of which were held in Chicago in 1932. "Even if all the dry raiders in America were marching the streets of Chicago in June," he claimed, "I doubt if the thirsty would find it impossible to get what they wanted. Only if the inhabitants of Chicago themselves joined in the movement to keep the city dry would success attend" the efforts. Horner's observations were an accurate depiction of reality of the situation in Chicago. However, the residents never came to the support of the Eighteenth Amendment. Horner's wet stance paid off and he

⁵⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 27 March, 19 April, 1932.

became the state's thirtieth—and first Jewish—governor, largely due to his clear position on legal alcohol.⁵¹

The building wet movement in Chicago joined an ever-growing, nation-wide campaign against the Eighteenth Amendment. This drive—expressing itself in the election of Anton Cermak as mayor in 1931 locally and of Franklin Roosevelt as the president in 1932 nationally—resulted from novel social and political alliances that brought Prohibition to the forefront of debate. By 1932, the issue took an even greater political importance than the Depression. The campaign for repeal, along with the elections of Cermak and Roosevelt, brought together Chicago area residents from a variety of social backgrounds. Immigrant groups such as the Irish, Czechs, Poles, and Germans voted together with (previously Republican) African Americans to produce a new voting bloc based on class interest instead of ethnic or racial identity. Middle- and upper-class reformers who formerly voted Republican additionally joined this coalition in an attempt to get rid of dry laws and alleviate crime. This union worked to create a novel culture and political environment during the 1930s.⁵²

With the ascendancy of Franklin Roosevelt to the presidency in March 1933, repeal became more urgent. Voters who chose Roosevelt and the Democratic Party were irritated with the interference of government in the personal lives of citizens. However, they did not want a smaller government in general. Instead they looked to

⁵¹*Chicago Tribune*, 27 March, 19 April, 1932.

⁵²Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 364; John Allswang, *A House of All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890-1936* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), Chapter Seven.

the national state to fix the economy. With wet politicians winning a number of seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives, and with Roosevelt becoming president, the path was clear for repeal. Beer became legal in March 1933 and the full abolishment of the amendment occurred later in December.

The return of legal alcohol, however, did not occur the way in which many opponents of Prohibition wished it would have. Groups such as the Crusaders advocated following the Canadian system and establishing the liquor, beer, and wine industries as government-ran operations. Unlike the Canadian system, however, revenue from liquor sales would not be allowed. State governments would distribute the alcohol without the accumulation of taxes or profit. The Crusaders hoped that all advertisements for alcohol would be eliminated. Congressional members, however, saw this method as outside the function of government. Many critics charged that such a plan was contrary to free-market principles and pushed for private industry to run the alcohol industry. In the end, the Twenty-First Amendment placed private industry in charge of production and distribution, implementing a similar system as was in place in the pre-Prohibition era.⁵³

At the beginning of Prohibition in July 1919 opponents lacked the political and social organization in order to present a significant challenge. As the 1920s progressed, a diverse group of residents banded together to build a grassroots opposition to the Eighteenth Amendment. While in the early years of Prohibition, dries could claim that all they needed to do was enforce the law effectively and the

⁵³*Chicago Tribune*, 18 January, 1931; Norman Clark, *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of Prohibition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976).

experiment would work. This argument became impossible to sustain as the realization that full enforcement and law abidance was not possible. The ill effects of the attempt to eradicate alcohol became too great to ignore. Crime appeared to be getting worse, not better. Respect for the law was at a historic low point. The fabric of civilization seemed to be ripping apart at the seams. The chaos inflicted in cities such as Chicago provided impetus to tip the scale nationally toward repeal. The Eighteenth Amendment became an unsustainable project and the pressure to have legal booze instead of omnipresent unlawfulness became greater.

CONCLUSION

Beer and light wines returned in March 1933 and liquors with higher alcohol content in December with the commencement of the Twenty-first Amendment. The majority of retail proprietors continued to operate their businesses. At midnight, April 7, crowds gathered around the city to have their first official legal sip of beer since 1919. The Loop was particularly celebratory. Singing "Happy Days Are Here Again" and praising their new president, they cheerfully abandoned fourteen years of performing rituals to evade enforcement officers. German Chicagoans, as well as residents of other nationalities, relished the day, as they no longer were demonized and their drinking customs were affirmed as truly "American." Non-Germans and Germans drank together. Residents from all backgrounds rejoiced. Democratic politicians were particularly joyous, as they were seen as the liberators and champions of repeal. Acting mayor Frank Corr drank beer from a stein with other Democratic politicians at an event the Iroquois Club hosted. Corr delivered an address heard over WGN radio in which he told listeners that beer was the city's best hope for prosperity. He also vowed to prevent criminal organizations from peddling beer.¹

With repeal came the alleviation of a number of societal problems. The Twenty-first Amendment greatly relieved the criminal situation in Chicago.

¹*Chicago Tribune*, 7 April 1933.

Residents who the law formerly deemed as criminals were brought back into society as worthy citizens. Retailers, producers, and distributors of alcohol, who were previously the targets of enforcement, went on to live law-abiding lives. Within years, observers noticed that police corruption had been greatly reduced following repeal, although it was by no mean eliminated.² Nonetheless, the Eighteenth Amendment still permanently impacted Chicago society. The experiment resulted in lasting transformations in the world of crime, politics, and culture.

Even after the return of legal alcohol, criminal elements continued to have influence. Despite the push against crime and the success of repeal, organized lawlessness persisted. Prohibition standardized participation in the underground economy and desensitized residents to breaking the law.

Monetary and social capital remained in the hands of the highest leaders. This money and influence made its way into both legal and illegal ventures. The Outfit did not relent its control of the alcohol market easily but instead continued distributing beer and liquor into the mid 1930s, as they were able to offer lower prices than legal outlets. Once they did exit the booze trade, they found no problems entering other rackets. Criminal leaders continued their control of labor unions. Men who gained wealth and prominence during Prohibition flourished in their criminal endeavors into the 1940s and 1950s. With men such as Murry “The Camel” Humphreys, Jack “Greasy Thumb” Guzik, and Paul “The Waiter” Ricca in positions of

²*Chicago Tribune*, 13 April, 1953.

authority, Chicago's famed criminal organization, increasingly referred to as "the Outfit," continued to hold sway on the city. Strategic murders endured. The group ventured into legitimate business. For instance, the Jake Guzik and his brother Harry, along with a number of other former participants in the illegal alcohol trade, entered a long-time partnership with millionaire publisher Moe Annenberg. Chicago criminal leaders also expanded geographically. Building greater relationships with networks in other cities, the Outfit extended its markets westward into southern California and Las Vegas. Their influence can be traced through culture, notably Hollywood movies, and local and national politics. While in a less dramatic fashion than during the Prohibition era, the Outfit persisted in swaying governmental officials and keeping largely clear of indictments.³

The continuance of organized crime and the Outfit in the city was largely due to the persistence of other laws restricting gambling, prostitution, and other illegal substances. Labor racketeering and extracting wealth from both unions and business owners additionally served to add to their income. Systems of graft and protection subsisted and influenced enforcement units into the late twentieth century.⁴

³*Abendpost*, 22, 27 July, 17 November, 1934, Boxes 13 and 18, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. Gus Russo examines the Chicago Outfit and their influence after 1933 in the city and nation in *The Outfit: The Role of Chicago's Underworld in Shaping Modern America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003) and in *Supermob: How Sidney Korshak and His Criminal Associates Became America's Hidden Power Brokers* (New York: Bloomsburg, 2006).

⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 4 October, 1995; Roger Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War: Mayor Edward J. Kelly of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), Chapter Six.

Prohibition additionally left a lasting impact on politics in Chicago. Anton Cermak's Democratic organization, built largely around the opposition to the Eighteenth Amendment continued in the form of the political machine headed by former chief engineer of the municipal Sanitary District Edward Kelly. Along with his close confidant Patrick Nash, the Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, Kelly consolidated what was left of Cermak's organization to establish what was known as the "Kelly-Nash Machine." Kelly's reign lasted until 1947. During this time frame, the Chicago Outfit continued to blossom, as Kelly maintained an open attitude toward victimless crimes such as gambling and did little to suppress their growth. Bribes paid to the Kelly machine contributed millions of dollars to their coffers. The reforms that Democrats undertook with Cermak became a mere empty gesture, as criminal leaders continued their pursuit of profit unabated.⁵

The Prohibition era additionally left a lasting mark on the city's culture, as the age of jazz became the era of swing. With repeal came the acceptance of not only alcohol but of many of the activities and attitudes that often surrounded it. The passage of the Twenty-first Amendment represented the approval of various cultural forms. Prohibitionists viewed alcohol as the gate to a life of failure and dissipation. Much of Chicago, however, refused to see intoxicating beverages in this manner. This victory for wet forces was not inevitable but was instead gradually won over the fourteen and a half years of Prohibition. The experience of the Eighteenth Amendment in Chicago confirmed that alcohol was indeed part of urban

⁵Roger Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War*, Chapter Six.

life in the United States. Chicagoans, and many of their fellow Americans wished to have commercial institutions that sold alcohol as a basis for social interactions. The view of liquor, beer, and wine as a supplement to socialization, creativity, and entertainment ultimately won out over the idea that it was a catalyst to crime that needed to be eradicated. Sub-cultures that surrounded drink only grew in popularity. While attempts to alleviate the problems caused by alcohol continued, they focused on the will of the individual instead of the elimination of drinking from society.⁶

With repeal came the acceptability of new and “modern” attitudes toward life. Caustics against “indecent” dancing were fewer, gambling was increasingly tolerated among the masses, and having a drink was as popular as ever in the city. Alcohol and venues in which to drink it were validated as enduring features of urban life in the United States.

The cultural institutions that developed around illegal drinking during the 1920s did not flounder but instead continued into the Depression. Nonetheless, in 1933, no one was quite sure what form commercial sites were going to take. Despite the general acceptance of drinking culture, the return of alcohol brought numerous battles over the laws and regulations that would surround it. It was the consensus that the return of the old-time male-centered saloon was not desirable.

⁶For discussion of the triumph of the culture of leisure nationwide see Lewis Erenberg, “From New York to Middletown: Repeal and the Legitimization of Nightlife in the Great Depression,” *American Quarterly* 38 (Winter 1986), 761-778; Burnham, John C. *Bad Habits: Drinking, Smoking, Taking Drugs, Gambling, Sexual Misbehavior, and Swearing in American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), Chapter Two.

Nonetheless, moral reformers worried about women's continued drinking in public. Despite these concerns, post-Prohibition drinking establishments remained more welcoming to females. The side entrance or "women's entrance" of pre-1919 establishments did not return and both sexes began using the same doors. Others fought to prevent the structure of the bar, a feature considered unfit for women, from persisting. They considered the bar a place of socialization between saloonkeepers and their patrons, which proprietors often used to sell customers more alcohol than they intended on drinking and to build social and political alliances. The elimination (or deemphasizing) of the bar and the increasing use of tables helped to create an environment that was considered more proper for women. These feminized establishments ultimately posed less of a threat to reformers than the previously all-male saloon.⁷

Post-Prohibition drinking venues held many differences from the pre-1919 establishments. More and more allowed the presence of women. While African American businesses remained largely segregated from "white" residents within leisure institutions, an increasing number of venues became more inclusive of various social groups. This social integration created the basis for multi-ethnic and inter-racial encounters in subsequent decades. The trend of cosmopolitanism, which gathered momentum during the turn of the century, grew significantly by the end of the Prohibition era. While other social factors played into this development,

⁷*Abendpost*, 3 January, 1934, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Box 13, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

such as the increased movement of residents across the city through use of the automobile and the movement for minimal workers' rights in the 1930s, illegal drinking venues provided an opportunity for unison where few previously existed.

Post-Volstead drinking venues did not have a singular form. In the post-1933 years, a variety of drinking business—including bars, taverns, and restaurants—took the place of old illegal establishments. Speakeasies evolved into various businesses such as female-friendly cocktail lounges and nightclubs. These institutions differed noticeably from pre-Prohibition saloons.

Chicago architect Eugene Klaber envisioned one such new drinking establishment for the Near North Side even before the official end of Prohibition. Klaber's "Post-Volstead Saloon," which exhibited an art-deco appearance, retained the bar of the pre-1919 era but also had large open windows and a dance hall. "It's a family resort for both sexes, old and young, combining the feature of the English bar, the French café, and the American dance hall and soda fountain," he described it. This imagined "place of cosmopolitan refreshment," in Klaber's words, was not associated with any one ethnicity but instead welcomed strangers from all social groups.⁸

The Century of Progress World's Fair of 1933 and 1934 exemplified how American culture had changed since the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. At the 1893 World's Fair, the orderly White City, which presented the achievements of American civilization, was physically separated from, and contrasted to, the Midway

⁸*Chicago Tribune*, 8 January, 1933.

Plaisance, where displays of foreign cultures presented exhibits of dancing and other amusements. Entertainments at the Century of Progress were no longer detached from the rest of the fair but instead became incorporated into the main grounds, known as the “Rainbow City” instead of the White City. Visitors to the World's Fair not only enjoyed legal beer but drinking venues proliferated in the vicinity of the fair as well. The Streets of Paris area contained a number of restaurants and cafes, such as the Café de la Paix and Le Moulin Rouge, where visitors purchased steins of beer along with their food and danced to live music. Other amusements included “peeps shows” and games. Visitors also found around a dozen bars in the area. The Streets of Paris was the most popular area of the fair. The Century of Progress demonstrated that the cultures of leisure, entertainment, and a degree of social tolerance were legitimized along with the return of beer.⁹

With the return of alcohol, the dry movement persisted in other forms. Abolishing alcohol sales was still among the methods reformers and politicians used to limit its negative effects in Chicago. Dry attitudes persisted after 1933. Prohibition laws continued to exist under an Illinois state statute that allowed counties and precincts to vote themselves dry. Fears of the return of the old-time saloon proliferated and alcohol had not entirely lost its stigma. A number of the

⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 23 May, 7 July, 1933. For examination of White City and Midway at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition see James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), Chapter Four.

city's precincts and many suburbs successfully held elections on the alcohol issue in 1934 and 1935.¹⁰

In spite of this initial reluctance in some areas, commercial alcohol venues proliferated in most neighborhoods in the twentieth century. While a number of the old drinking venues vanished under urban renewal and redevelopment, a significant number still stand to remind us of this mysterious era. Many of them continue to serve alcohol, food, entertainment, and excitement to female and male patrons and remain as cosmopolitan institutions that mold culture and identity.

Despite the return of legal alcohol, the Eighteenth Amendment left a permanent impression on the black market in Chicago and its surrounding towns and suburbs. Committing crimes against statutes of ethics continued to be widespread with the proliferation of the informal economies related to gambling and narcotics after 1933. Prohibition helped to standardize participation in the underground economy and desensitized society to disobeying, and profiting from, laws of morality.

¹⁰*Chicago Tribune*, 11 April, 1934.

APPENDIX A
NOTE ON SOURCES

A significant portion of this dissertation is based on a database constructed from samples of law-violators and addresses of drinking establishments from federal court records, reform organization records, and newspapers. I attained the vast majority of these names and addresses from the records of the United States District Court of the Northern District of Illinois in Chicago. Unable to gather complete data, I collected a cluster sample of names, addresses, and other information from the Criminal Dockets, Commissioners' Dockets, and Case Files in the United States District Court in Chicago, as well as the *Chicago Tribune*, for years 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1932. The *Tribune* articles were gathered between May 2008 and June 2012 using the Pro Quest Historical *Chicago Tribune* database. Choosing to focus on these four years allowed me not only to attain a broad perspective of the underworld but also to detect economic, political, and social change over time.

From the Criminal Dockets I gathered the names of defendants charged with violating Prohibition laws and the results of their cases. From the Commissioners' Dockets, I collected the names, residential addresses, and business addresses of individuals who went before a United States Commissioner in Chicago after they were arrested (but were not necessarily ever charged with a crime), as well the names and addresses of bondsmen and bondswomen. Commissioners' Dockets at the National Archives at Chicago are not complete for years 1924 and 1928 hence the data is incomplete. Additionally, I did not collect the names of John Doe's, thus the numbers are not exact but instead approximate figures. Further, the Case Files included little information and I only used them for 1920 and 1924. While the bulk of the data was obtained from the four years selected in the federal court records, I

also collected the names and addresses of law-violations for other years in other sources, particularly the Research Data of the Committee of Fifteen, the Papers of the Juvenile Protective Association, the Papers of William Dever, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Chicago Herald Examiner*, and the *Chicago Daily News*.

Including the names from newspapers and reform organization records, I accumulated information on 9,152 individuals who participated in the alcohol black market. Table 1 uses only the names from the records of the United States District Court at Chicago to understand enforcement and includes the number of men and women government agents apprehended, the number of them brought to trial, and the number eventually convicted.

Within this set of 9,152 names, I attempted to find demographic information about law violators by searching the census for them. I was able to find 769 names (see table below for total numbers of names in database for each year and the number found in census for each year). Ancestry.com was tremendously useful in this task. While my complete set included samples from outside 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1932, the bulk of the names found in the census were from these four years. Table 2 utilized this demographic data.

Using the business addresses in the database, which are not complete but instead are primarily from the federal court records of years 1920, 1924, 1928, and 1932, I constructed geographic representations of the underground alcohol economy in Chapter Two. Using the software ArcView GIS, I utilized 3,360 addresses of places selling, storing, manufacturing alcohol to create the maps in Chapter Two. Over ninety of these addresses were eventually matched and mapped.

Year	Total Names Found in All Records	Total Found in Census
1919	161	30
1920	1705	263
1921	62	4
1922	97	9
1923	32	5
1924	1103	86
1925	2	0
1926	3	1
1927	84	0
1928	2798	224
1929	7	1
1930	5	2
1931	93	27
1932	2844	114
1933	13	0
Unknown Date	143	3
Total	9152	769

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William Dever Papers. Chicago History Museum.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Chicago Broad Ax

Chicago Daily News

Chicago Defender

Chicago Herald Examiner

Chicago Tribune

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